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Christian Durieux
An Enchantment

A Graphic Poem

LOUVRE

éditions

NBM
Comics Lit

Eyes closed it's her entirely

Paul Eluard, "In exile."

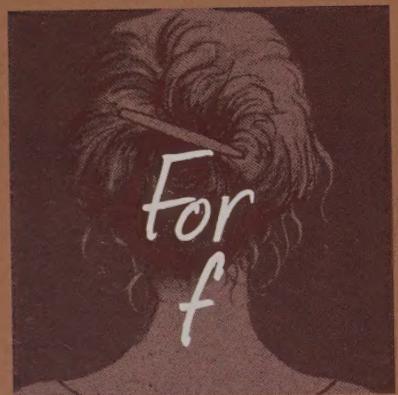
*So we shall recount what a true night is.
An enchanted, free night. A night for all nights.
A woman for all women.*

Yes, right: a lesson of the night.

Philippe Sollers, "Le cavalier du Louvre"

An Enchantment

Christian Durieux



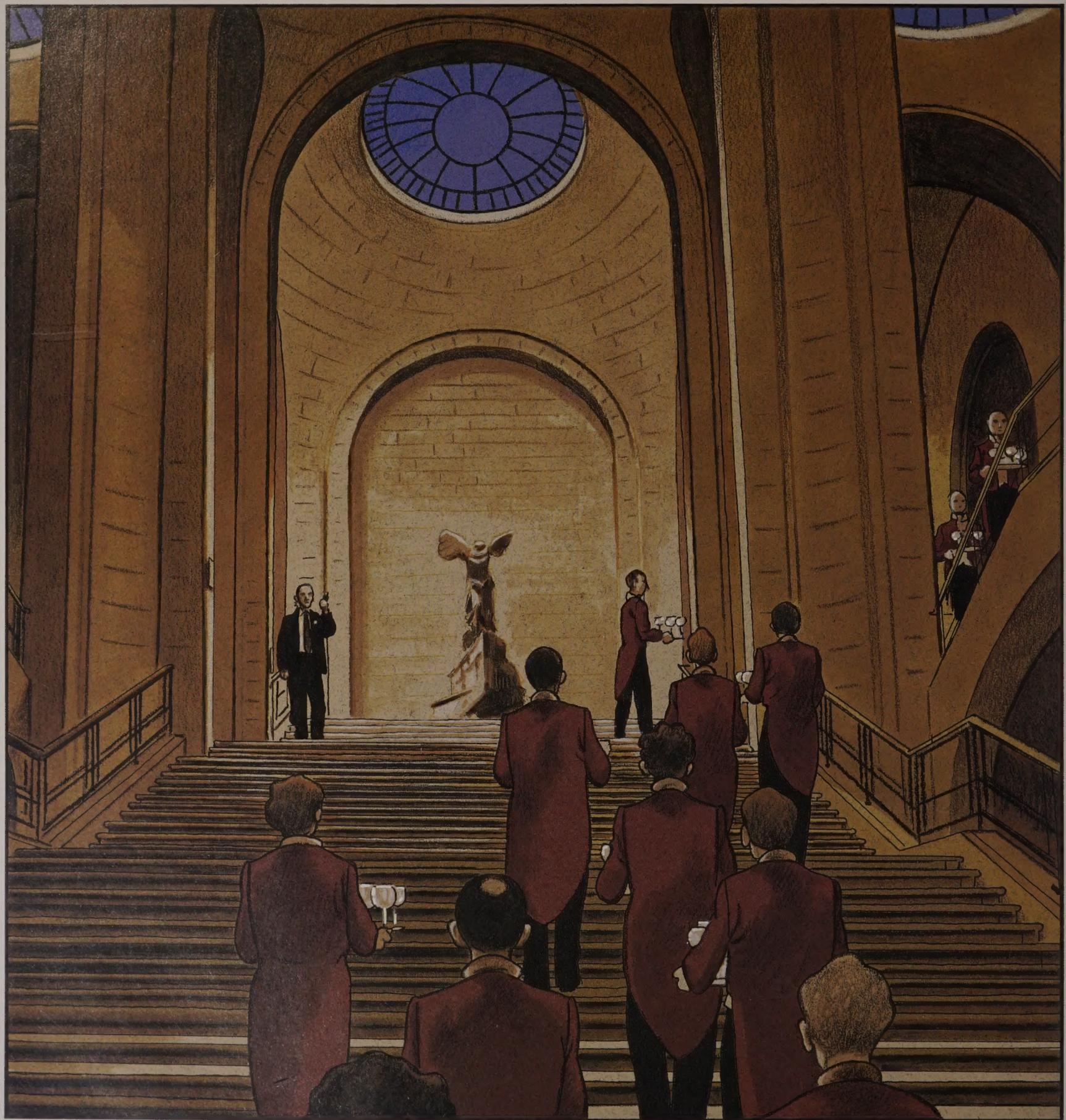
To the memory of my father, to my mother.

*To Jean-Marc and Véronique, Valérie
and Laurent, Laurence and Yves, lovely people.*

*To those who, in their own way, also made this book:
Sébastien, Fabrice, Patrice, Fabien,
Celia, Didier, Evelyne, Elise, Claude, Alain.*

And a big thanks to Chrystel, queen of photo editing.







WHAT IMBECILES, GOOD GOD!

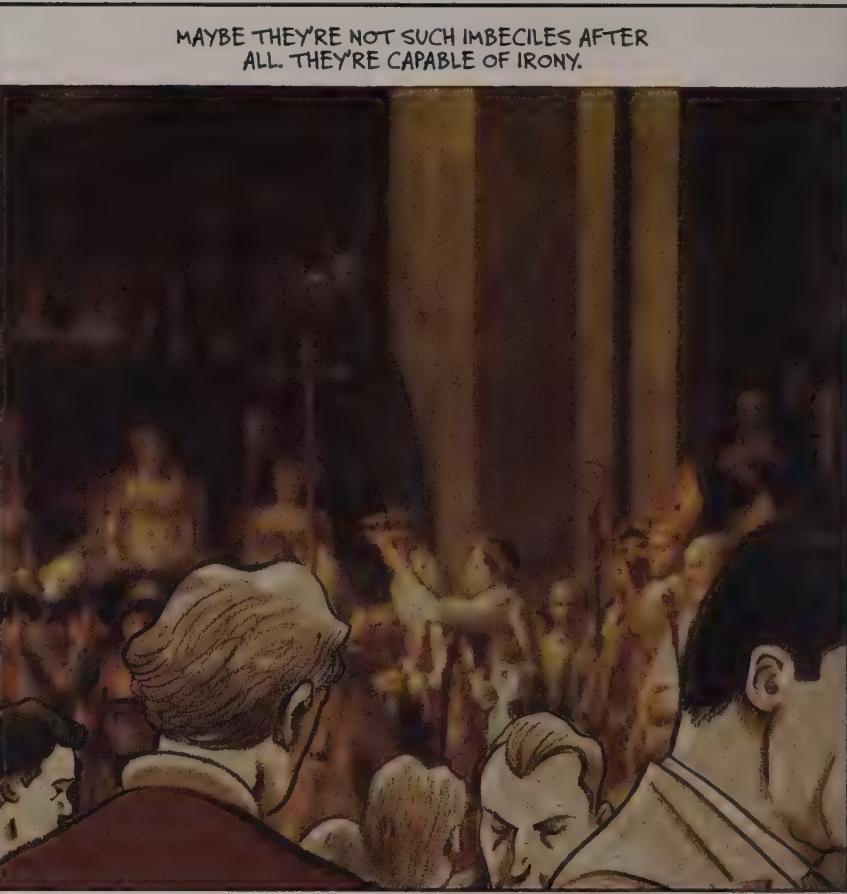


WHAT IMBECILES.



WHOM DO THEY
TAKE ME FOR?

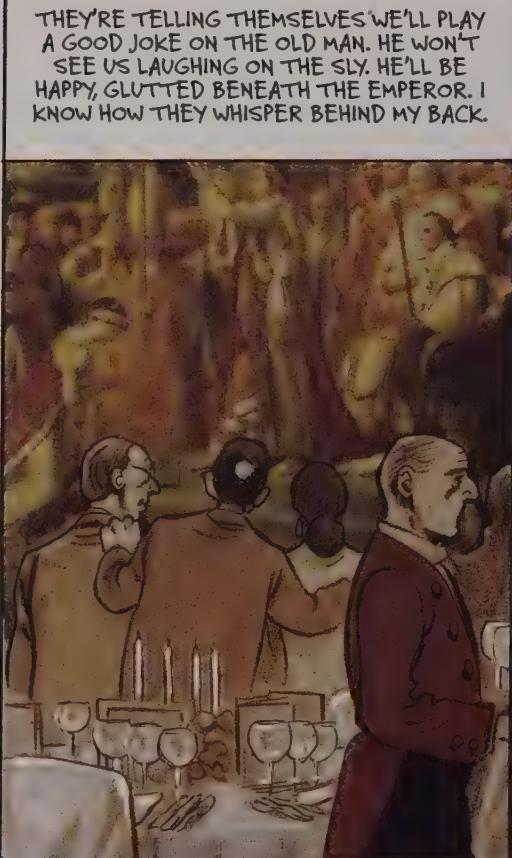
THIS RIDICULOUS BANQUET.
HERE...UNDER THE TYRANT'S NOSE.



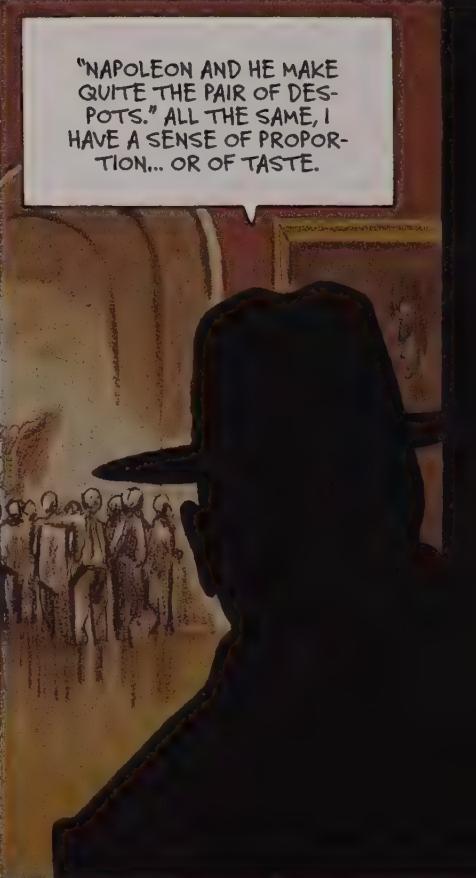
MAYBE THEY'RE NOT SUCH IMBECILES AFTER
ALL. THEY'RE CAPABLE OF IRONY.



THEY'RE MOCKING ME. THEY'RE TELLING
THEMSELVES THAT A FEAST WILL FLATTER
HIM. POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE.



THEY'RE TELLING THEMSELVES WE'LL PLAY
A GOOD JOKE ON THE OLD MAN. HE WON'T
SEE US LAUGHING ON THE SLY. HE'LL BE
HAPPY, GLUTTED BENEATH THE EMPEROR. I
KNOW HOW THEY WHISPER BEHIND MY BACK.

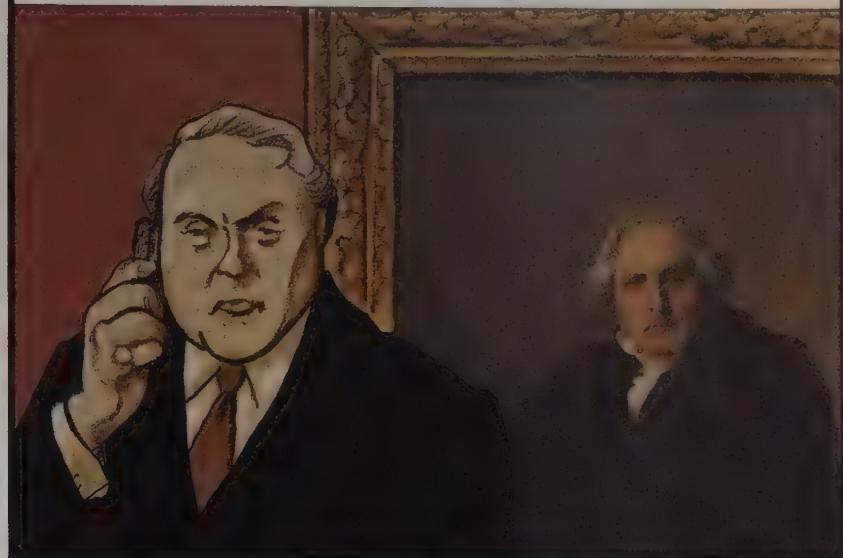


"NAPOLEON AND HE MAKE
QUITE THE PAIR OF DES-
POTS." ALL THE SAME, I
HAVE A SENSE OF PROPOR-
TION... OR OF TASTE.

GOOD GOD, ALL THOSE PREGNANT WOMEN'S DRESSES! WHAT AN ERA.



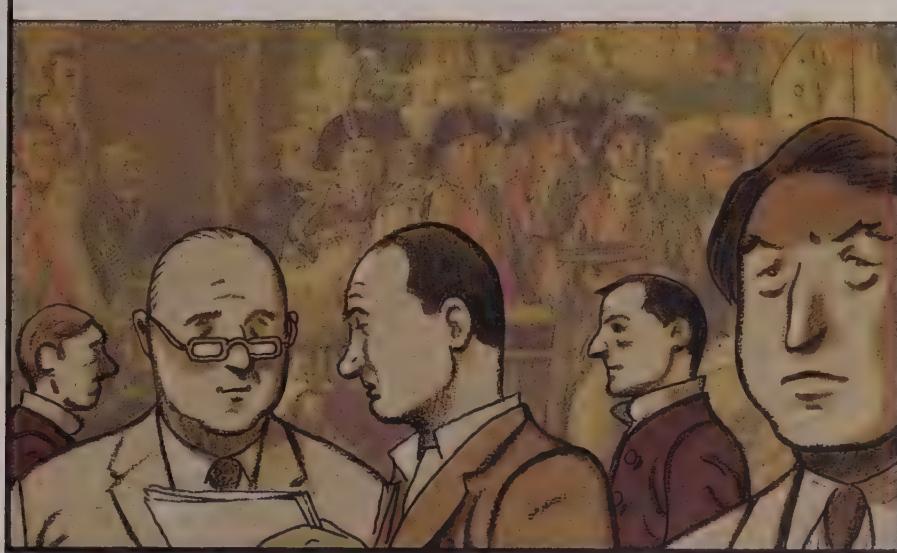
AH! BERTAUT...HE'S VERY MUCH IN HIS ELEMENT.



AND DE LA MOTTE, MAGNIFICENT!



THEY'RE PERFECT! THEY TAKE TO THIS LIKE DUCKS TO WATER.



IT'S THEIR CROWNING MOMENT THIS EVENING, NOT MINE.





I'LL LET THEM CELEBRATE
THIS AMONG THEMSELVES.

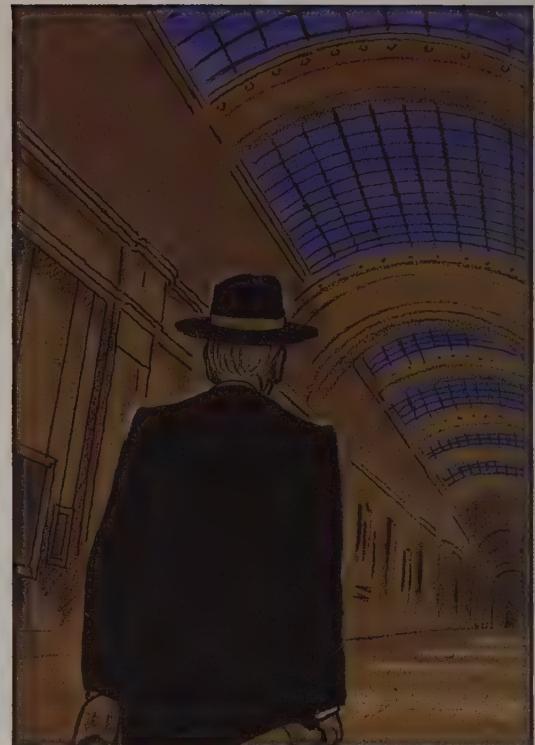
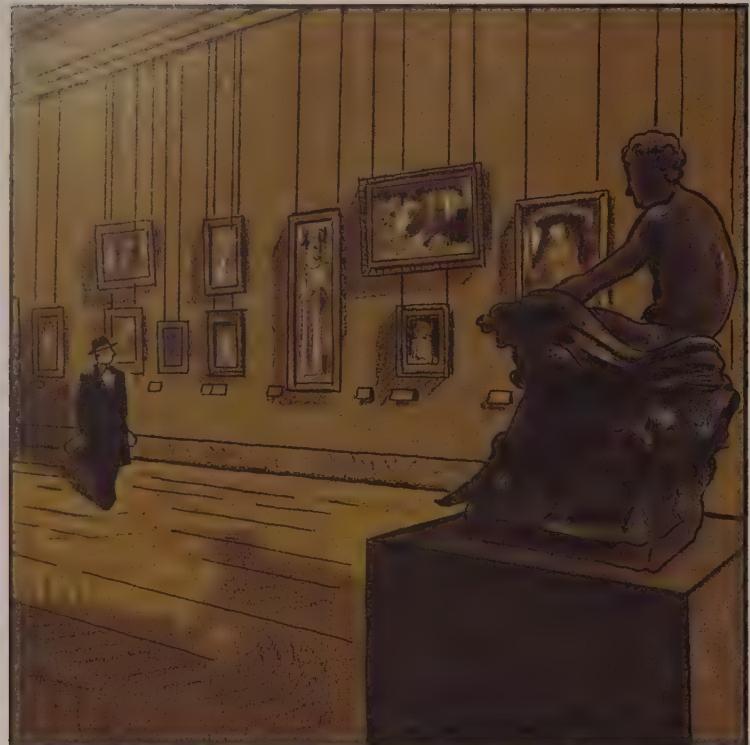
I CAN DECIDE FOR MYSELF
ABOUT MY FUNERAL



TO HELL WITH THEM.

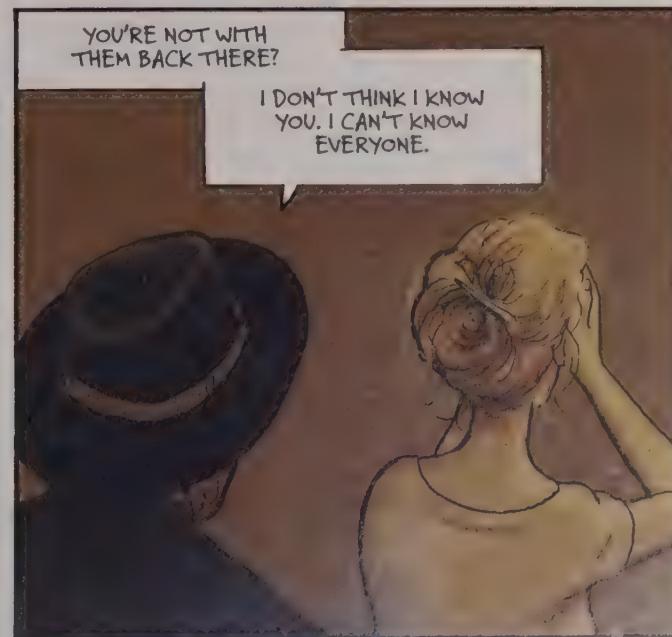












THERE WERE
ALWAYS TOO MANY
PEOPLE AROUND ME.
ARE YOU CRYING?

NO, I'M NOT
CRYING.



I'M MAKING
IT DARK.

THERE ARE TOO MANY IMAGES HERE.
TOO MANY BEAUTIFUL THINGS.



IT'S ALMOST STIFLING. TOO MANY
BEAUTIFUL THINGS.



I'M BEING SELECTIVE. I'M CHOOSING JUST ONE.

I MAKE IT DARK
WITH MY HANDS...



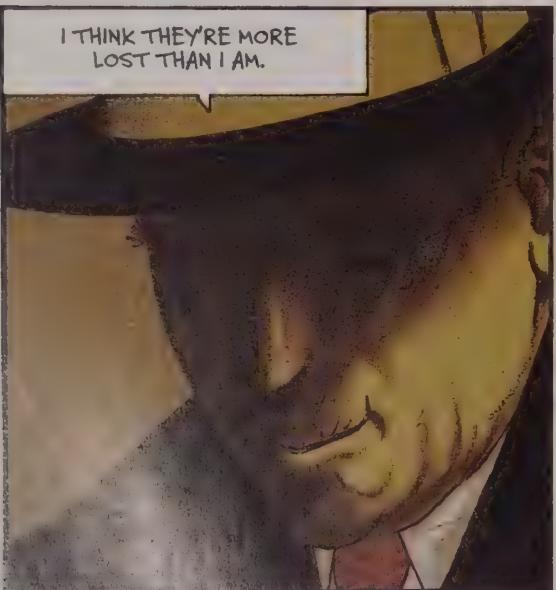
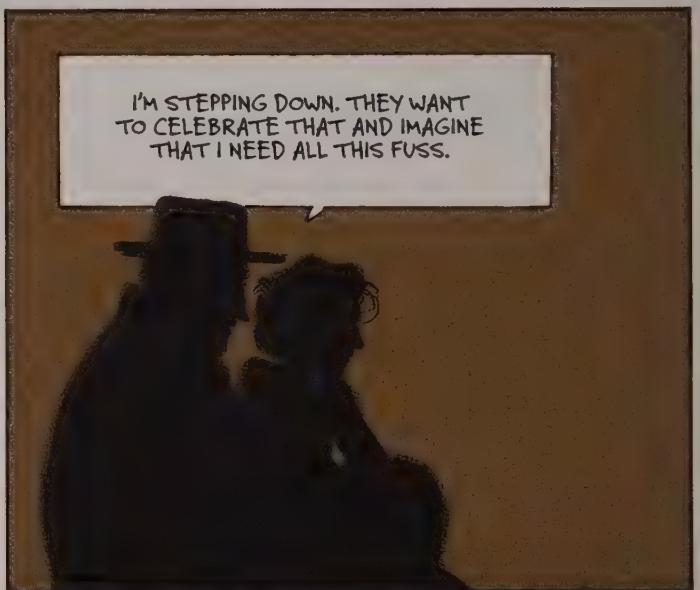
AND WHEN I OPEN THEM, I SEE ONLY THE ONE I'VE CHOSEN.





YES, IT'S NOT THE SAME KIND OF MAJESTY.

SORRY?



YOU'VE DITCHED THEM!

IT'S NOT THE
FIRST TIME,
BUT IT'LL
REALLY PISS
THEM OFF.

I'M AT AN AGE WHERE IT'S A
DUTY TO NO LONGER DINE IN
SUCH MEDIocre COMPANY.

BUT SAY...

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
THE MUSEUM'S CLOSED.

EVEN SECURITY'S NOT WHAT
IT USED TO BE, CLEARLY.

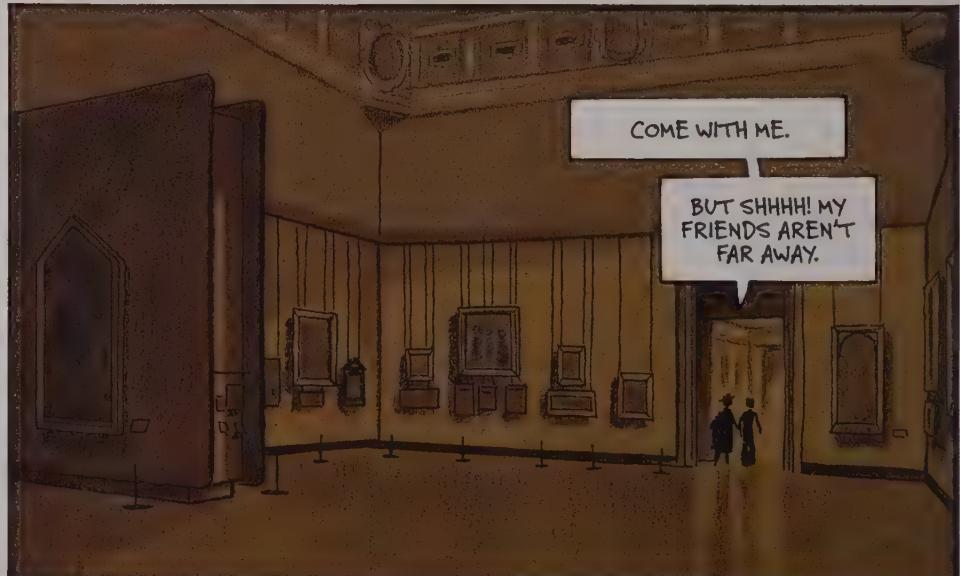
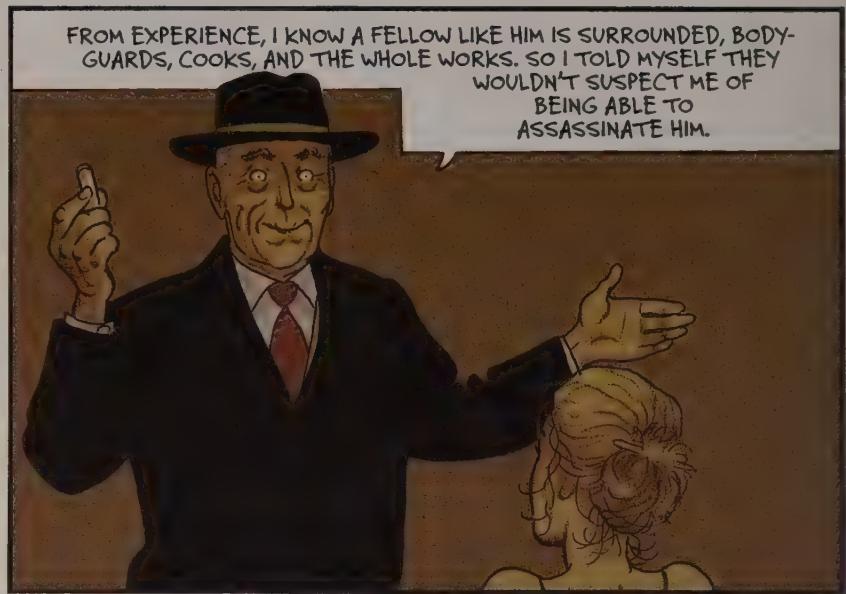
YOU'RE NOT
HERE FOR ME? I
DON'T KNOW...
TO ABDUCT ME,
TO ASSASSI-
NATE ME?

I HAVE SOMETHING TO
DEFEND MYSELF WITH,
YOU KNOW.

IVE HAD IT ON ME
FOR YEARS...TO
ASSASSINATE
SOMEONE.

POTASSIUM CYANIDE.

WHAT'S A MAN LIKE YOU
DOING WITH THAT IN
HIS POCKET?



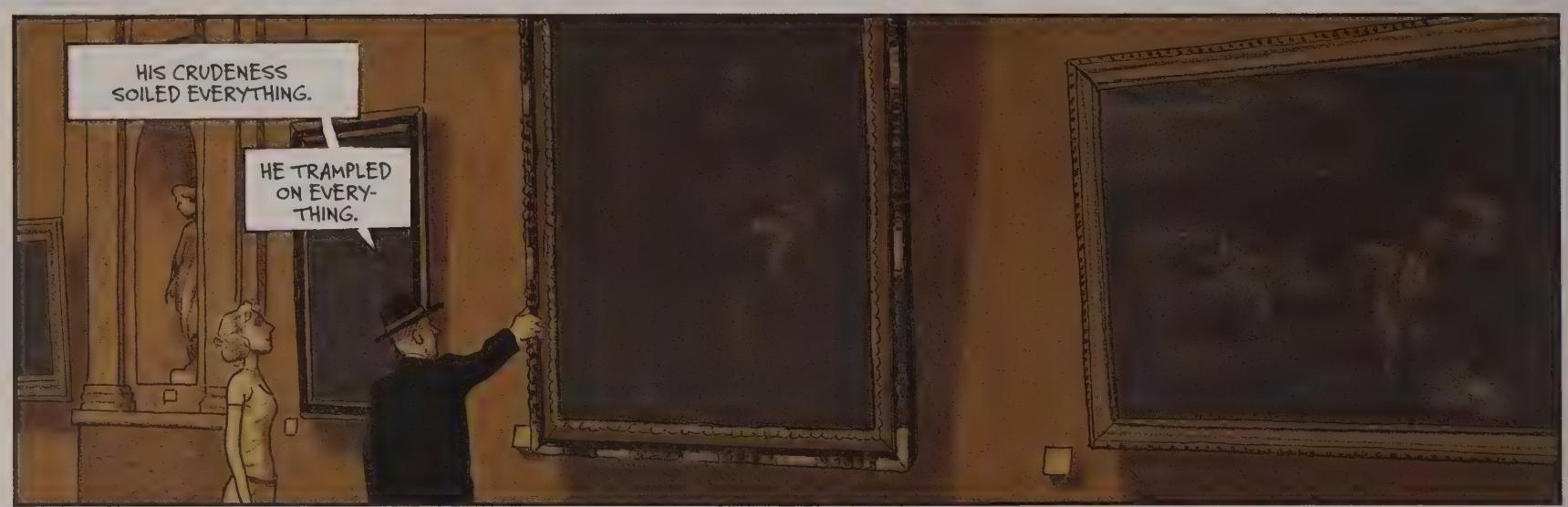


DO YOU SEE
ALL THIS?



LOOK AT ALL THESE MARVELS.

ALL THESE MARVELS WHICH ITALY HAS PRODUCED FOR CENTURIES.



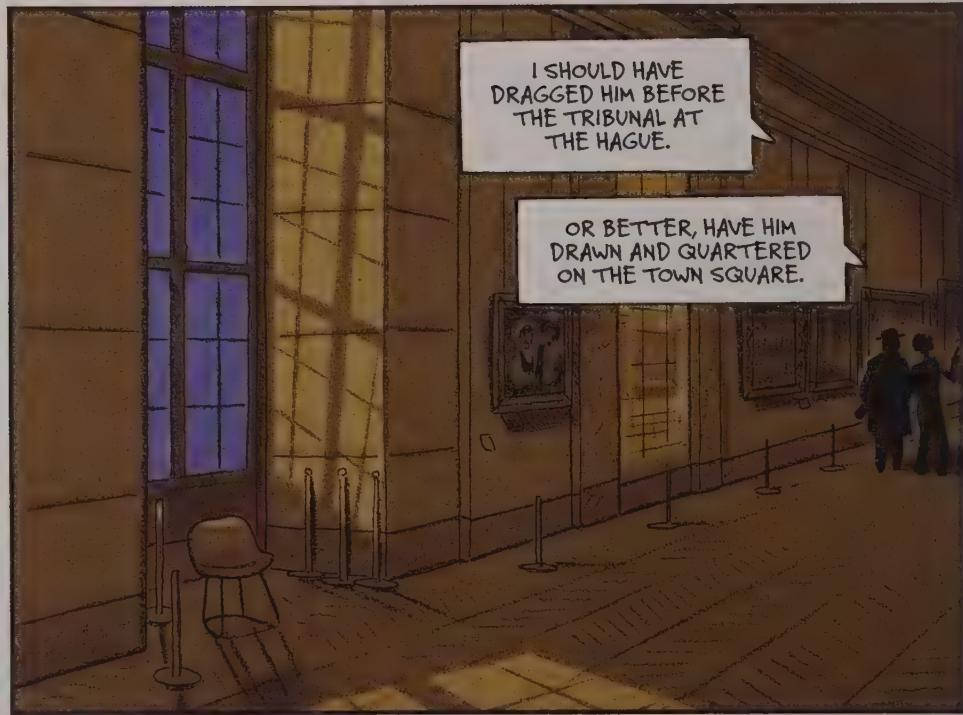
HIS CRUDENESS
SOILED EVERYTHING.

HE TRAMPLED
ON EVERY-
THING.



IT'S INEXCUSABLE.

YOU'RE RIGHT. YOUR
POISON IS TOO GENTLE
FOR HIM BY FAR.



I SHOULD HAVE
DRAGGED HIM BEFORE
THE TRIBUNAL AT
THE HAGUE.

OR BETTER, HAVE HIM
DRAWN AND QUARTERED
ON THE TOWN SQUARE.

WHAT ABOUT ME? WOULD YOU HAVE POURED YOUR POISON FOR ME IN A LITTLE GLASS OF RED? I BET YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE A CORKSCREW.



I WAS ABLE TO SWIPE THEM FROM THE CATERER ON THE SLY BEFORE...SLIPPING AWAY.

I DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO SWIPE A CORKSCREW.



I KNOW HOW TO OPEN A BOTTLE WITHOUT A CORKSCREW.

THEN YOU'RE NO MURDERER, YOU'RE AN ANGEL!



WHO KNOWS?

BUT IT WOULDN'T BE VERY DISCREET HERE.

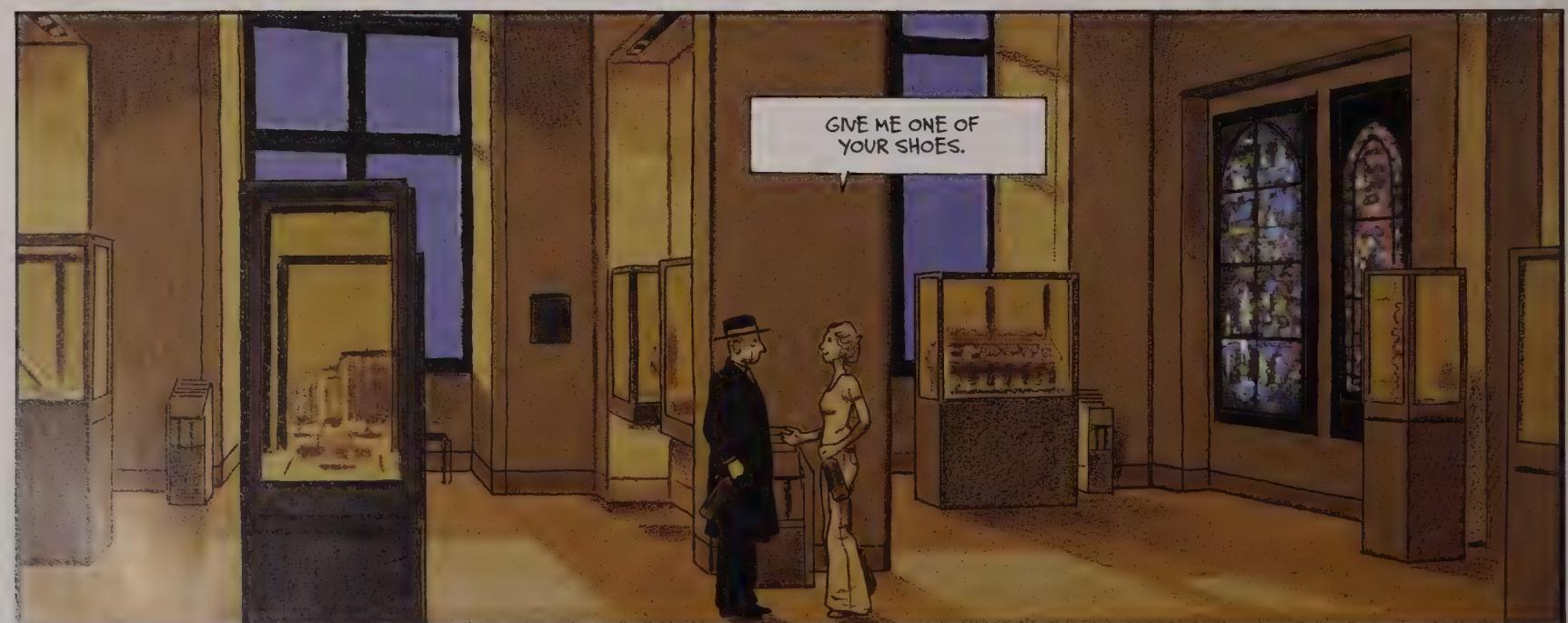
YOU MEAN WE SHOULD SKEDADDLE?



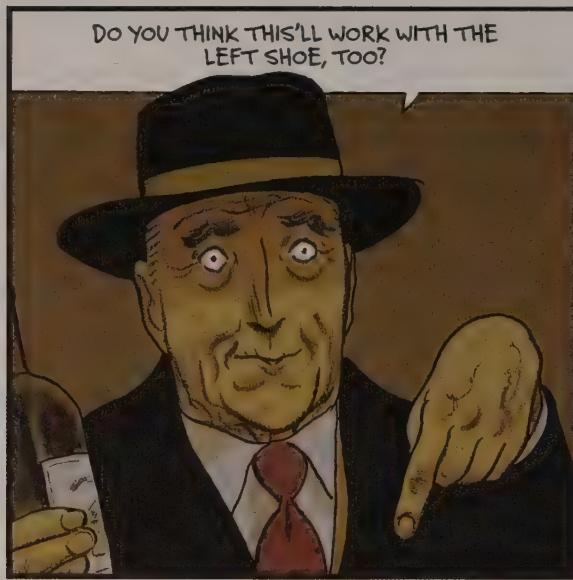
AND HOW!

WE'RE SETTING SAIL, CAPTAIN!

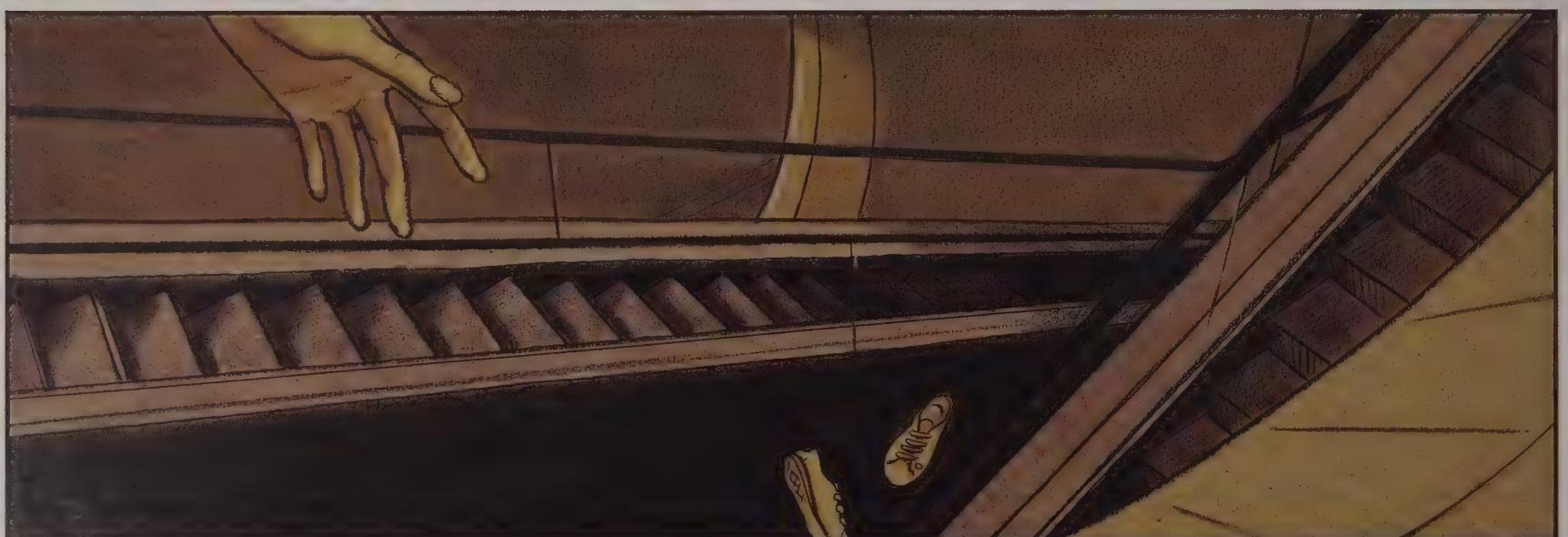














YOU KNOW, YOU DON'T MAKE IT TO MY POSITION JUST LIKE THAT. THERE WERE TWISTS AND TURNS. I WAS EVEN A CABINET MINISTER ONCE.



A LONG TIME AGO, LONG BEFORE YOUR BIRTH.

BEFORE MY BIRTH! YOU'RE EXAGGERATING.



AT A TIME, IN ANY CASE, WHEN THE MUSEUM WASN'T JUST A MUSEUM.



MY OFFICE WAS BEHIND THIS DOOR. THE OFFICES OF THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE!

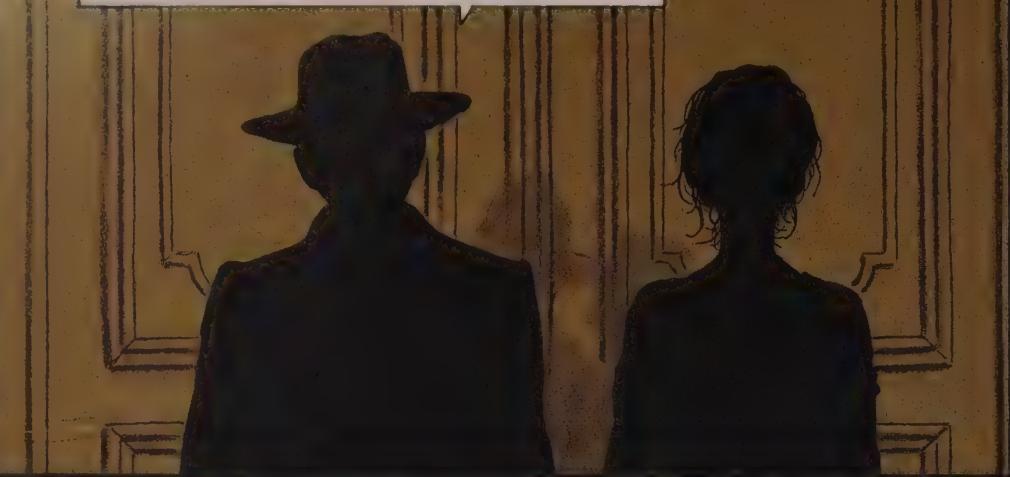
AND...I WAS THE MINISTER OF FINANCE.

ELIEU

CAFE RICHELIEU

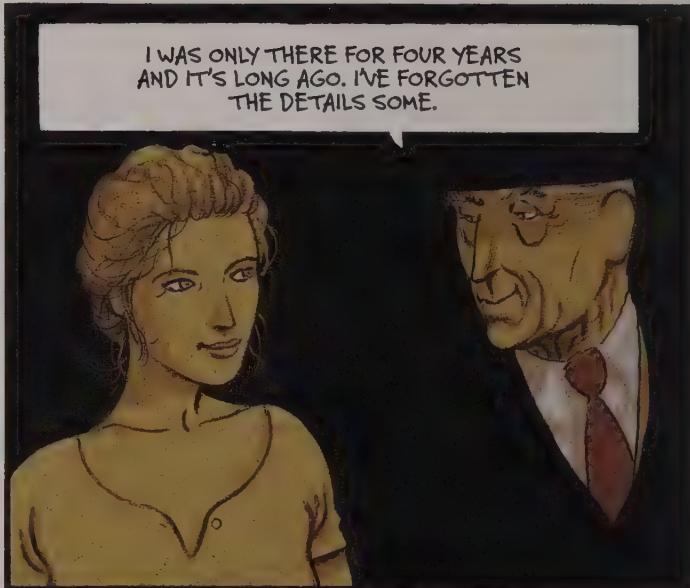
OF FINANCE! DO YOU REALIZE? WHAT A THOUGHT.

IN ANY CASE, THERE MUSTN'T BE MUCH LEFT BACK THERE.



IT'S FUNNY, I FEEL LIKE I'M VISITING MY GHOST SEATED BEHIND HIS LOVELY DESK, UNDER THE TAPESTRY, BETWEEN THE BUSTS AND THE LARGE CANDLESTICK HOLDERS.

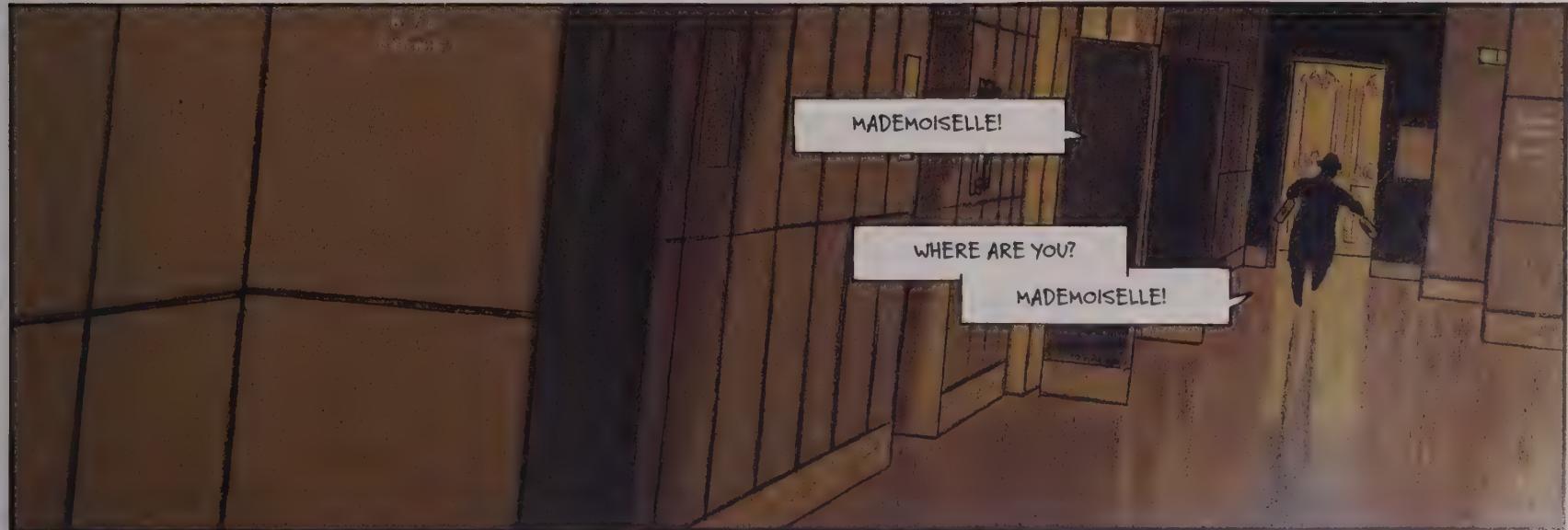
I WAS ONLY THERE FOR FOUR YEARS AND IT'S LONG AGO. I'VE FORGOTTEN THE DETAILS SOME.

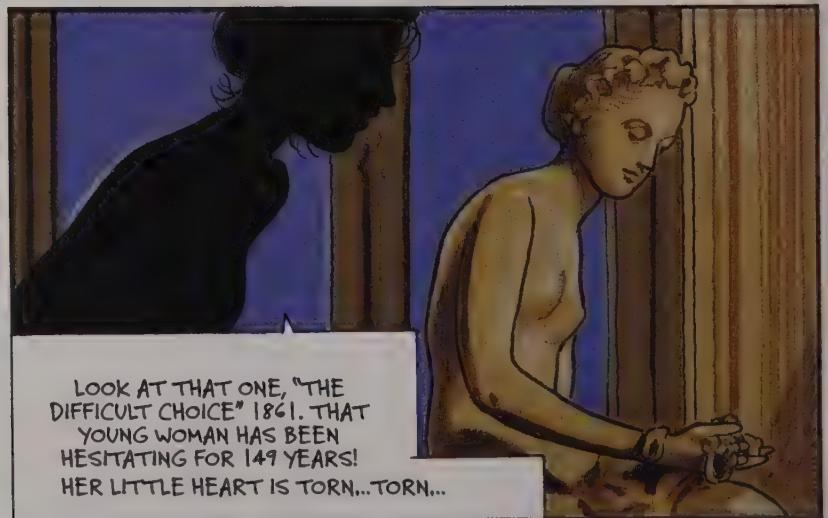
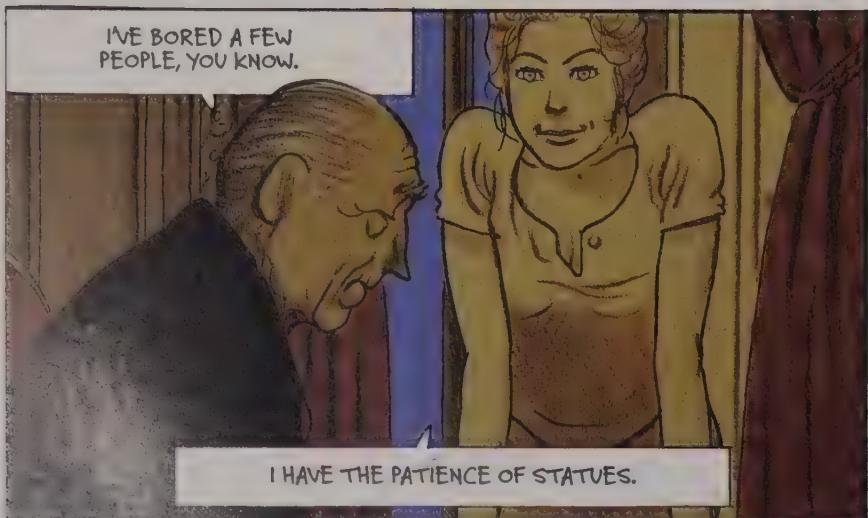
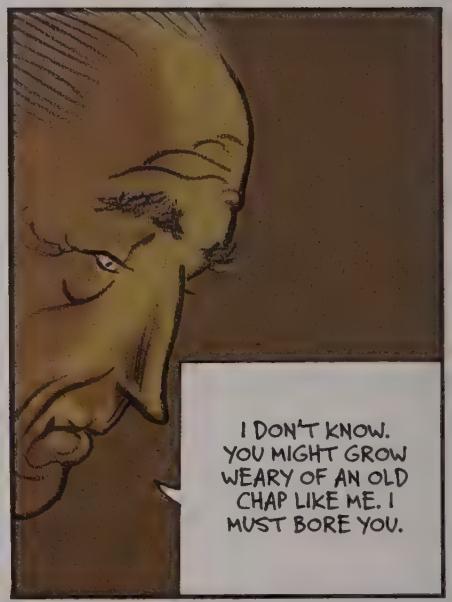


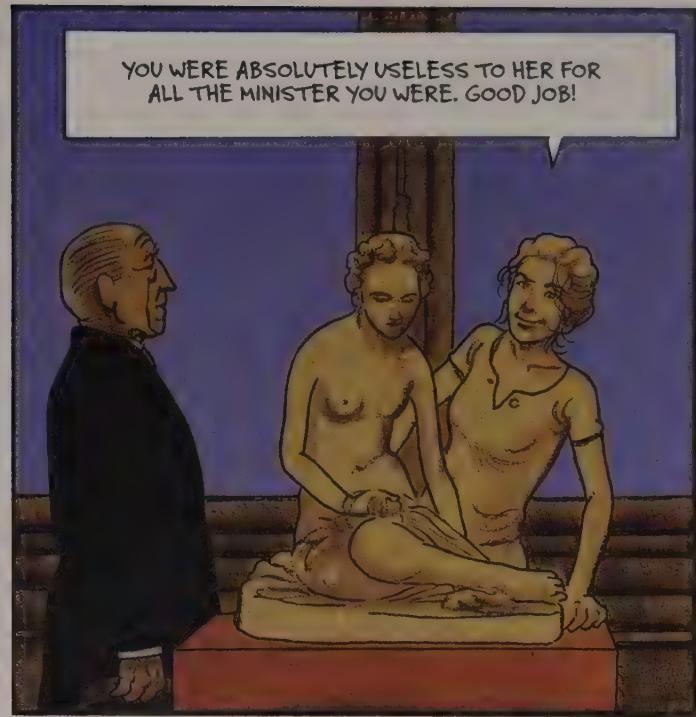
IT'S NORMAL FOR LAYERS TO SUPERIMPOSE THEMSELVES, FOR DUTIES TO CHANGE.

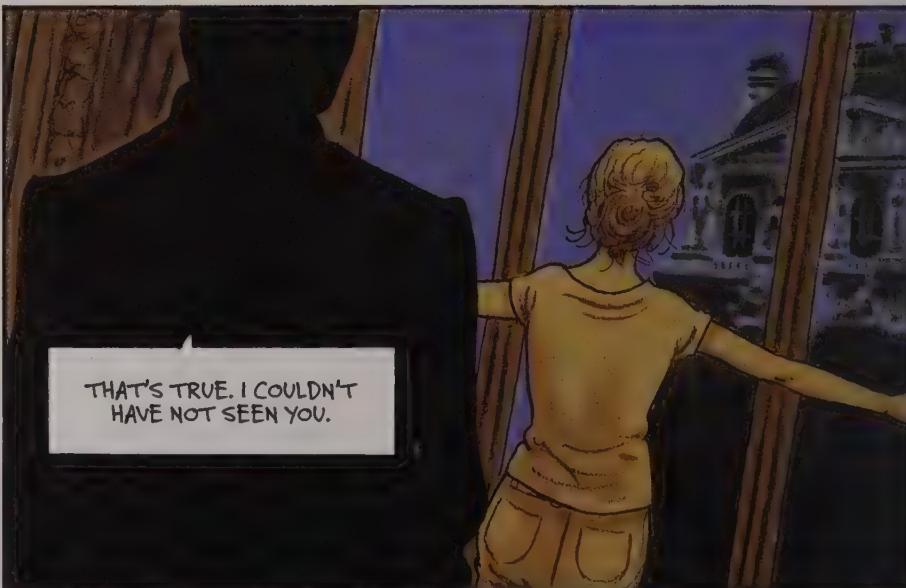
THE WHOLE MUSEUM TO CHANGE.

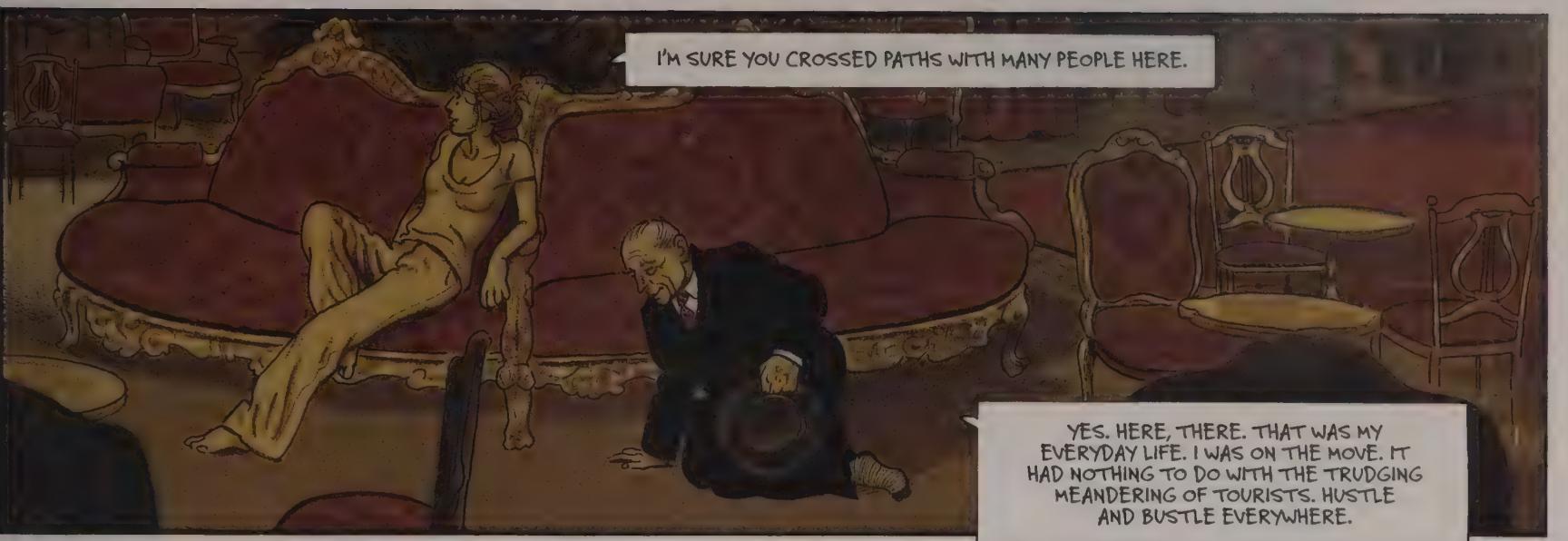












I'M SURE YOU CROSSED PATHS WITH MANY PEOPLE HERE.

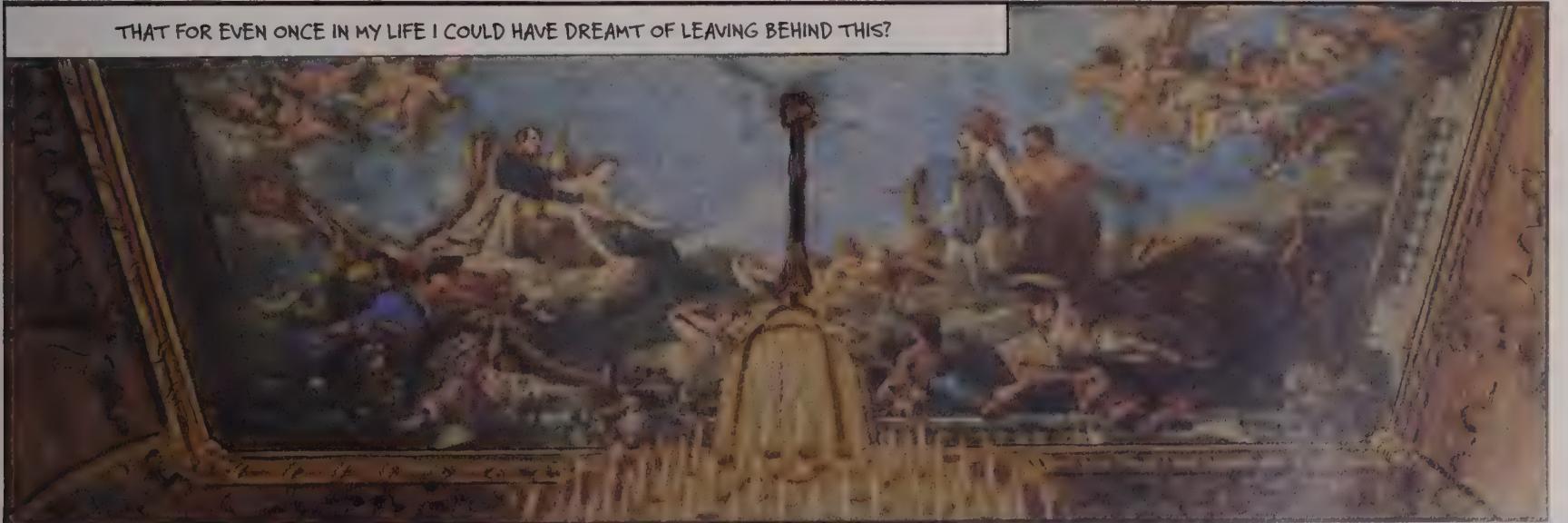
YES. HERE, THERE. THAT WAS MY EVERYDAY LIFE. I WAS ON THE MOVE. IT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE TRUDGING MEANDERING OF TOURISTS. HUSTLE AND BUSTLE EVERYWHERE.



Look.

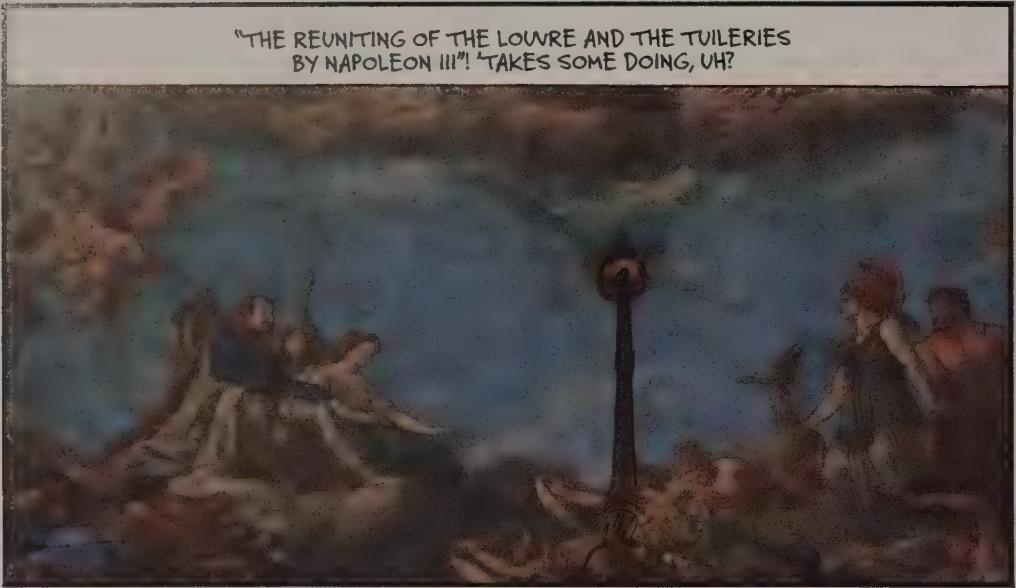
THEY TOOK ME FOR SOMEONE CRAVING POWER.
THEY'VE ORGANIZED THIS RIDICULOUS
BANQUET FOR ME HOPING
TO FLATTER ME.

LET'S JUST SAY I DIDN'T
LACK FOR PRIDE, BUT WHOM
DO THEY TAKE ME FOR?



THAT FOR EVEN ONCE IN MY LIFE I COULD HAVE DREAMT OF LEAVING BEHIND THIS?

"THE REUNITING OF THE LOUVRE AND THE TUILLERIES BY NAPOLEON III!" TAKES SOME DOING, UH?



I'M SMALL FRY COMPARED TO THAT.



JUST IMAGINE MINERVA AND HERCULES COMING TO VISIT ME! AND ALL THOSE ANGELS TO GLORIFY ME!



FOR FOUR YEARS I PASSED BY HERE, I'D STOP, AND WOULD LOOK AT THAT CEILING.



SOMEONE WOULD STOP BY YOU AND SAY TO YOU: "MONSIEUR THE MINISTER."

YES?



YOU, TOO, WILL DO GREAT THINGS.

WILL I ALSO HAVE A BEAUTIFUL SCEPTER?



EVEN
BETTER, A
LOVELY HAT.

A HAT? BUT MY
GREAT WORK?

DON'T WORRY, IT'LL
COME WITH THE HAT.

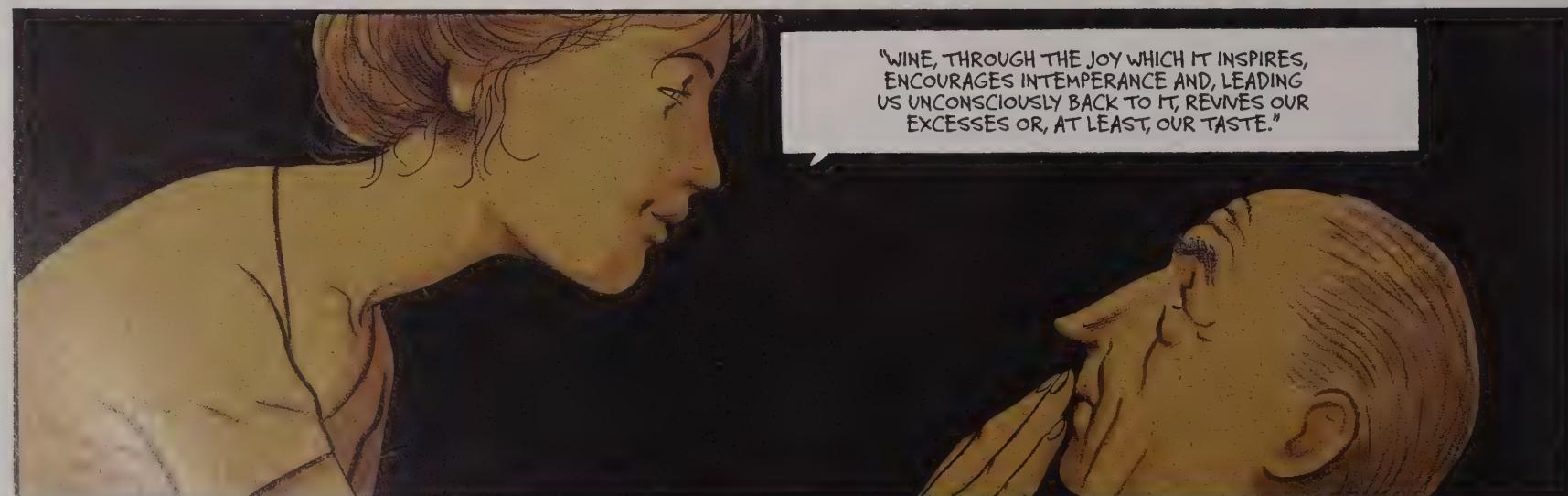
WILL IT BE
THAT EASY?

YOU'LL HAVE
TO LEARN TO
DANCE.

TO DANCE?

THE WORLD
EXPECTS GREAT
MEN TO DANCE!

YOU'LL OBTAIN
ANYTHING BY
DANCING.



A YOUNG WOMAN OF YOUR AGE KNOWS MONTESQUIEU?

THE "BEAUTIFUL CENTURY" ISN'T YOURS ALONE, MILORD.

THE 18TH CENTURY IS INDEED QUITE DIFFERENT FROM NAPOLEON THE PURITAN.

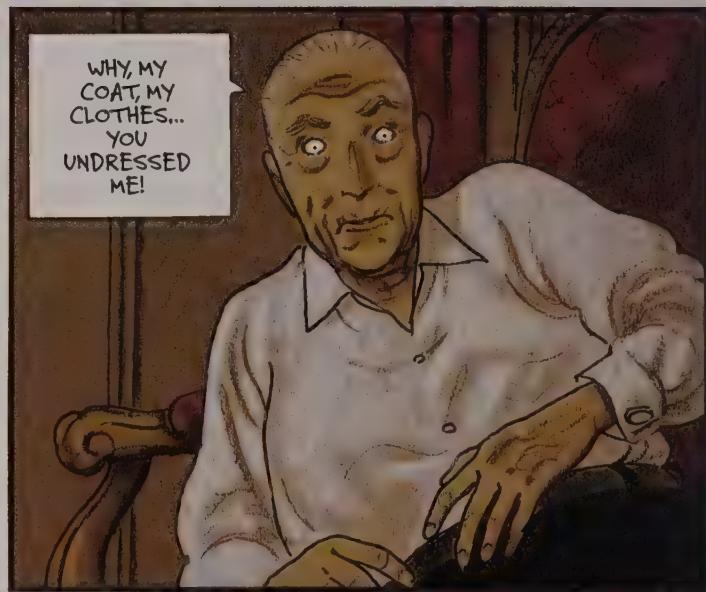
SHHHH.

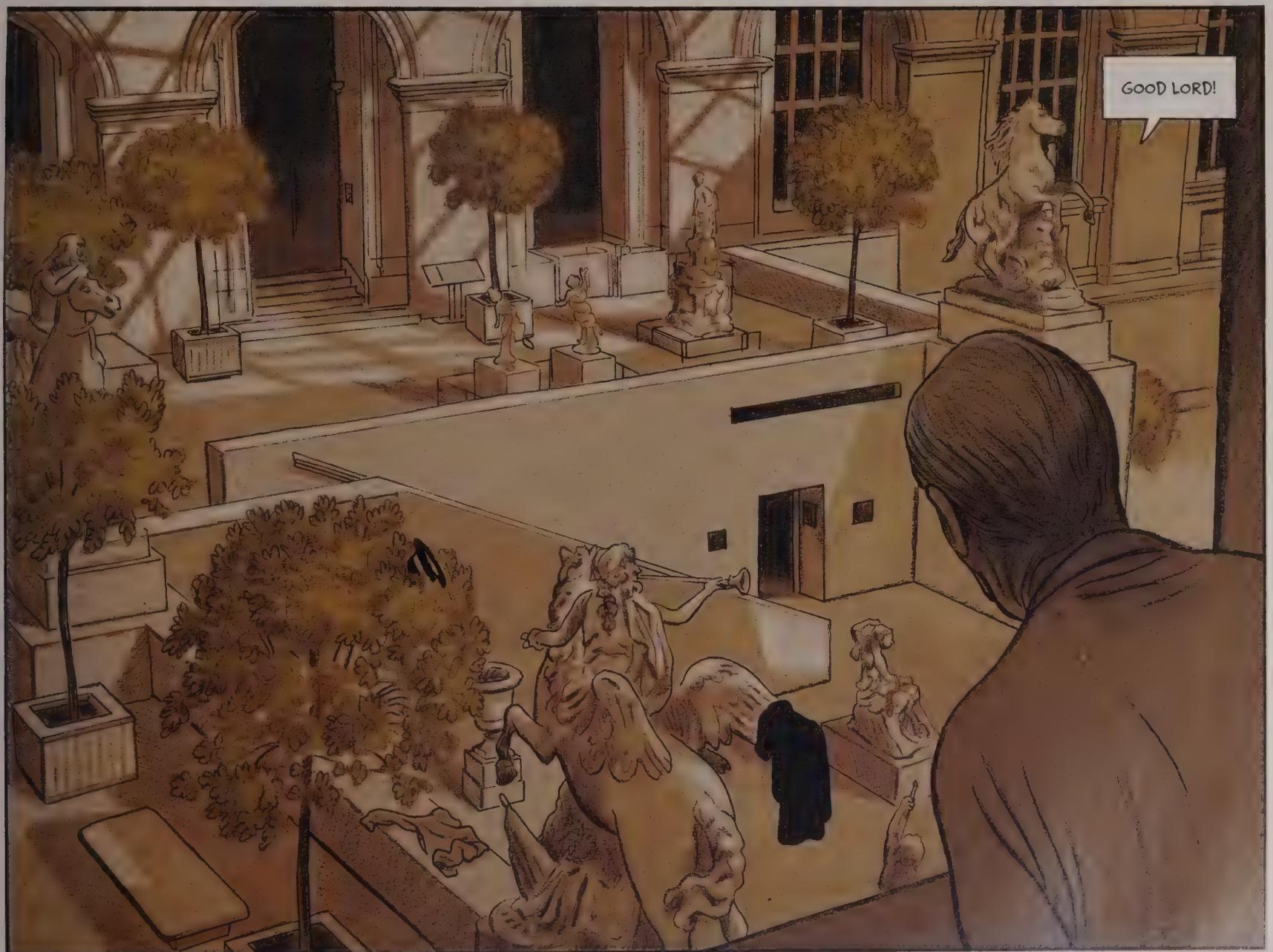
THEY'RE TRYING TO MATCH A PAIR.

IT'LL TAKE THEM A LONG TIME.









YOU'RE QUITE THE CHARACTER!

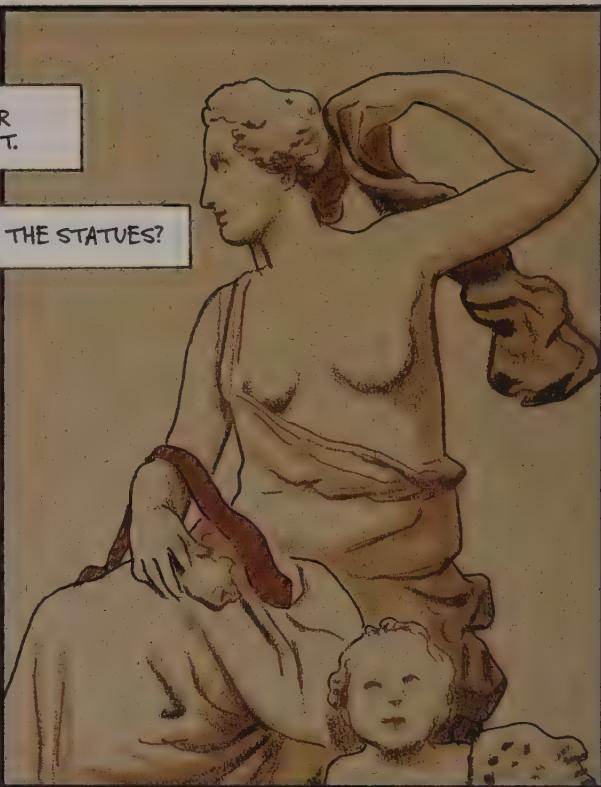


BACK IN THE DAYS OF YOUR OFFICE, WAS THAT YOUR BATHROOM DOWN THERE?



IT WAS OUR PARKING LOT.

AND THE STATUES?

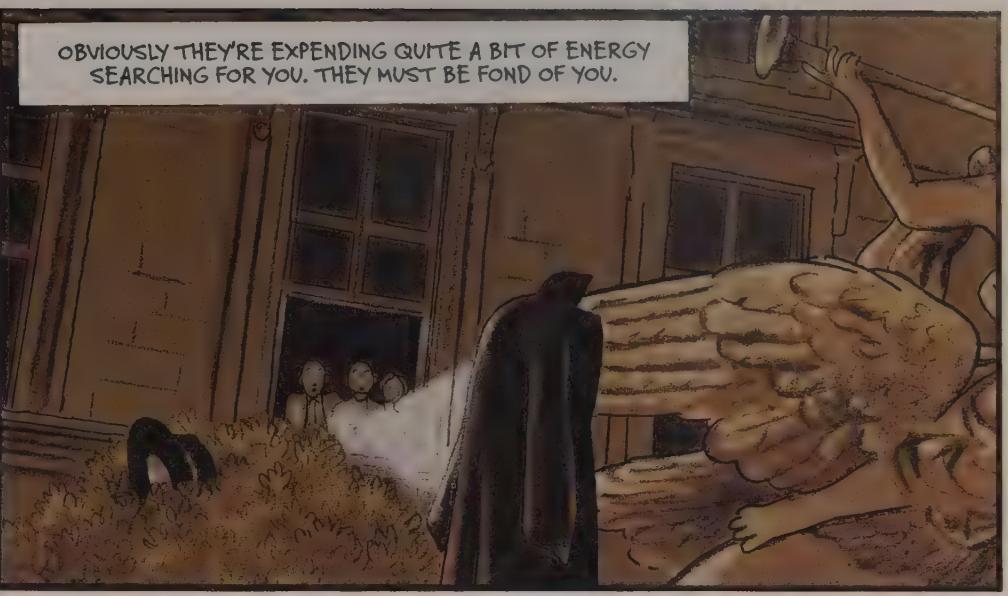


THEY WEREN'T THERE, THE STAIRS EITHER, OF COURSE. OR ANYTHING. IT WAS ALL DIFFERENT.





HEY, IT'S ALREADY
GETTING LIVELY.
WE WON'T HAVE
ANY PEACE.

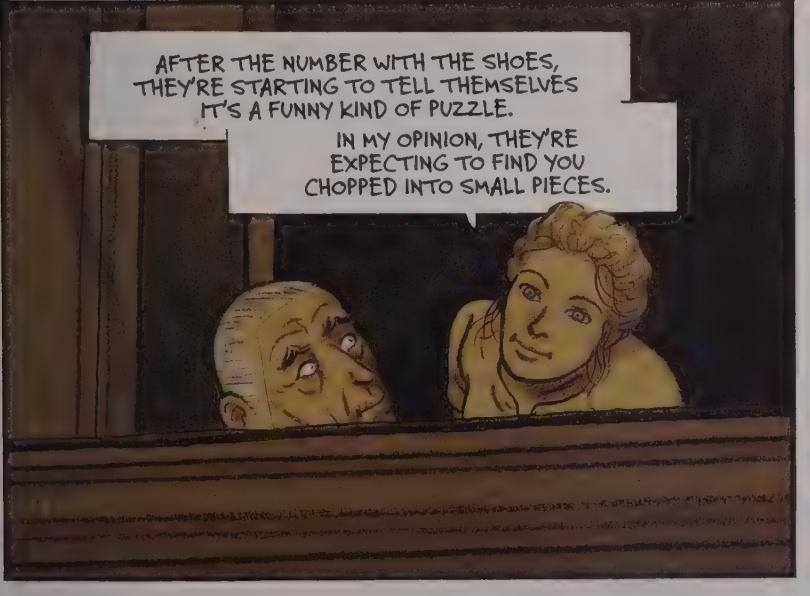


OBVIOUSLY THEY'RE EXPENDING QUITE A BIT OF ENERGY
SEARCHING FOR YOU. THEY MUST BE FOND OF YOU.



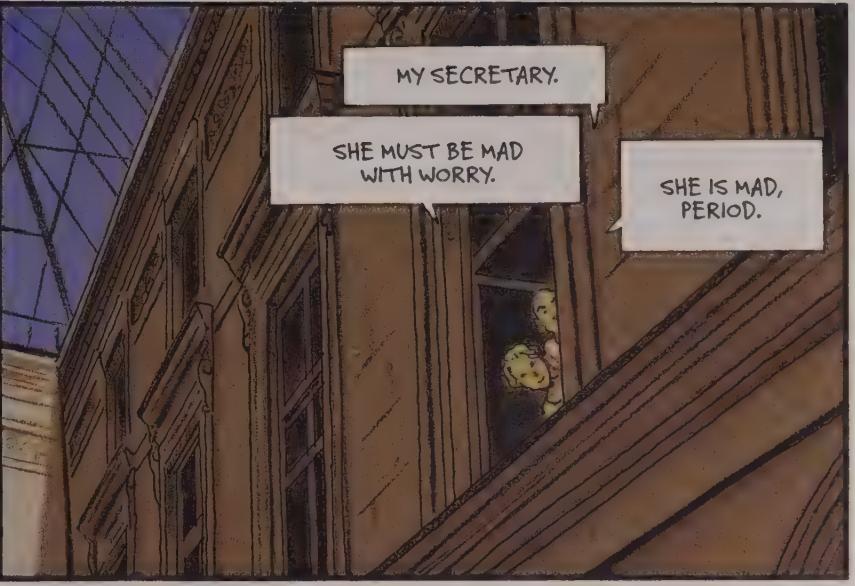
GOOD LORD, EVEN LA MOTTE'S WITH THEM!

WHO?



AFTER THE NUMBER WITH THE SHOES,
THEY'RE STARTING TO TELL THEMSELVES
IT'S A FUNNY KIND OF PUZZLE.

IN MY OPINION, THEY'RE
EXPECTING TO FIND YOU
CHOPPED INTO SMALL PIECES.



MY SECRETARY.

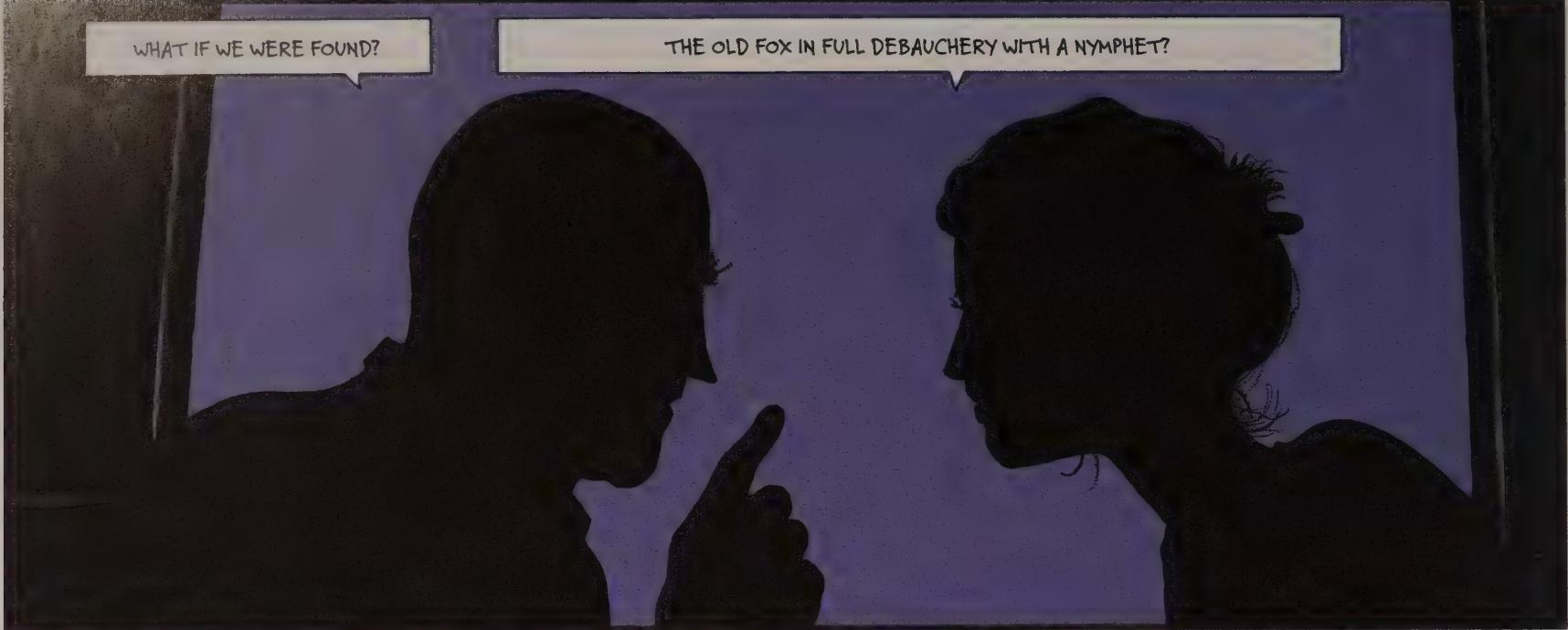
SHE MUST BE MAD
WITH WORRY.

SHE IS MAD,
PERIOD.



YOU'VE DONE ENOUGH,
HAVEN'T YOU? MAYBE WE
SHOULD CLOSE UP.

WHY SO SERIOUS? YOU'RE NO FUN.



WHAT IF WE WERE FOUND?

THE OLD FOX IN FULL DEBAUCHERY WITH A NYMPHET?

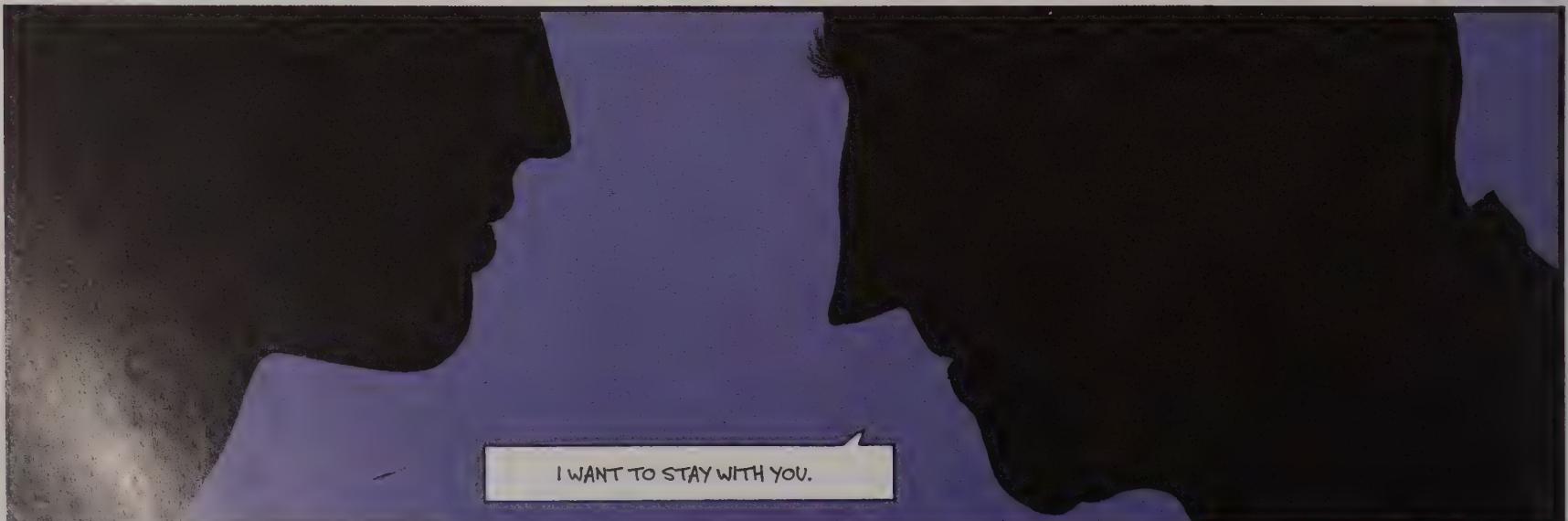


DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE
AFRAID OF A SCANDAL.
THAT'S NOT YOUR TYPE.



OF COURSE
I DON'T
CARE ABOUT
SCANDALS... WHAT
DO I HAVE
TO LOSE?

I JUST DON'T WANT
US TO BE FOUND,
THAT'S ALL.



I WANT TO STAY WITH YOU.

MADAME RÉCAMIER'S BED! SUCH A CHASTE WOMAN!

BUT SHE TURNED
ALL THE MEN'S
HEADS!

HAVE YOU KNOWN LOTS OF
CHASTE WOMEN?

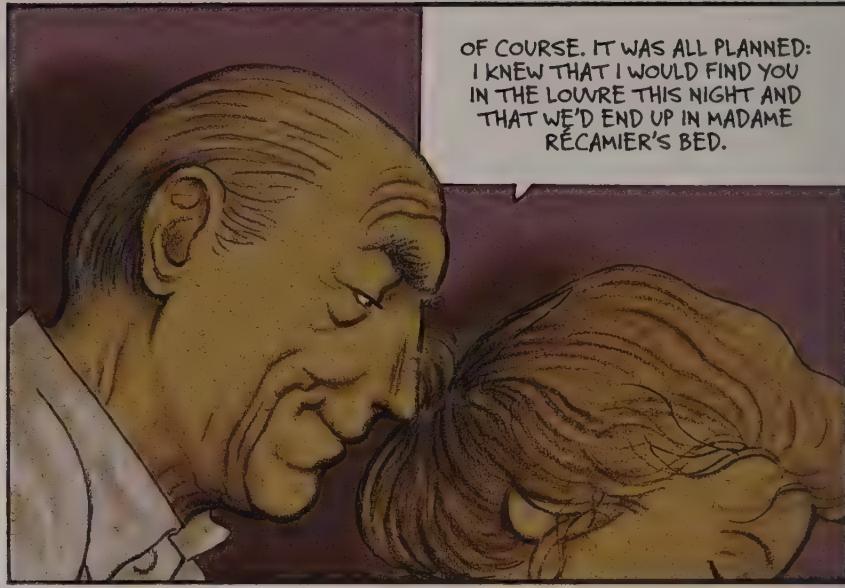
YOU'RE A
SASSY GIRL!

YOU'VE GOT A
REPUTATION.

PEOPLE TELL SO MANY STORIES.

DON'T PLAY
MR. MODEST.

YOU'VE COME
SO LATE.



TO LEAVE AS I WISH, WHEN I WISH.

ONE MUST KNOW WHEN
TO LEAVE THE BANQUET.

AND YOU
WANTED TO
LEAVE TONIGHT?

WHY NOT?

THAT WOULD'VE REALLY
PISSED THEM OFF DOWN
THERE: RIGHT SMACK IN THE
MIDDLE OF THE MEAL, IT
WOULD HAVE BEEN TACKY.

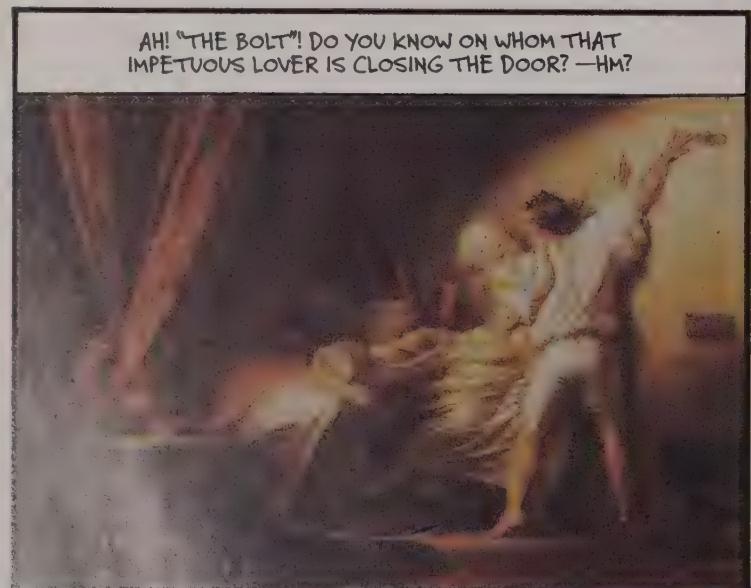
AND THE EMPEROR!
HIS CORONATION
PERFECTLY
BOTCHED. YOU
GET MY DRIFT.

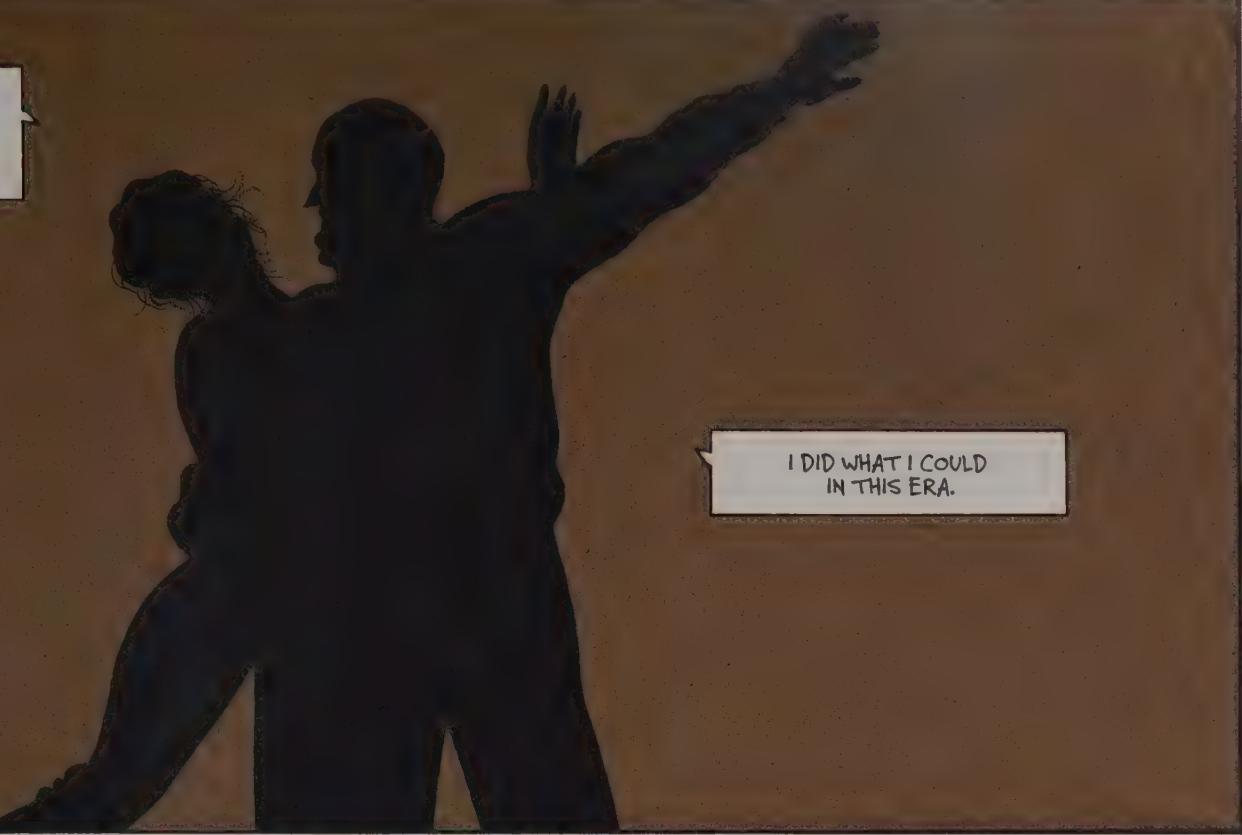
IT WAS THE RIGHT
TIME, WASN'T IT?

NOW, YOU'RE HERE.









AND YOU? WERE YOU BORN
TOO LATE...ON THE WRONG
SIDE OF THE DOOR?

I DID WHAT I COULD
IN THIS ERA.



SHH! THERE'S A COMMOTION.
THERE'S MORE OF THEM.



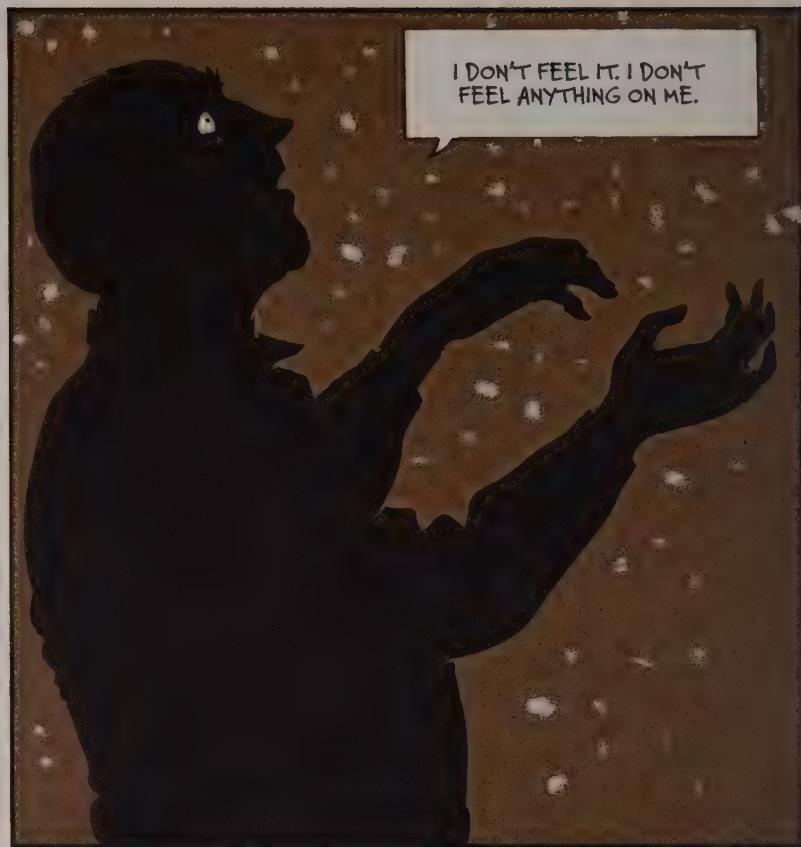
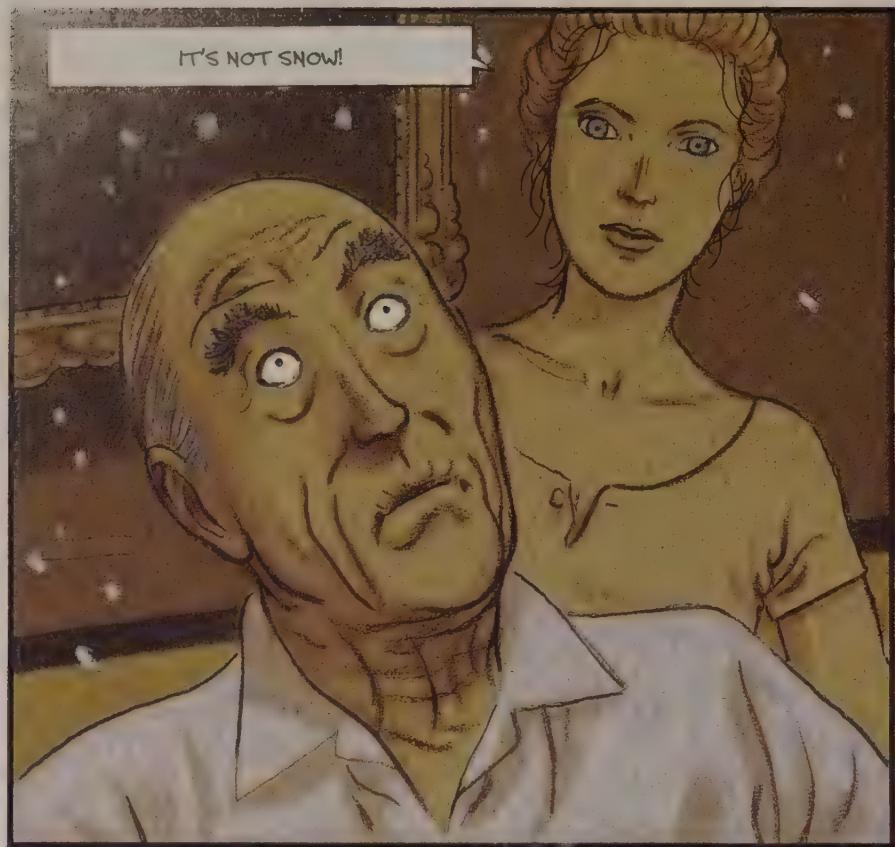
DON'T WORRY, WE'VE
ALMOST ARRIVED.

ARRIVED?

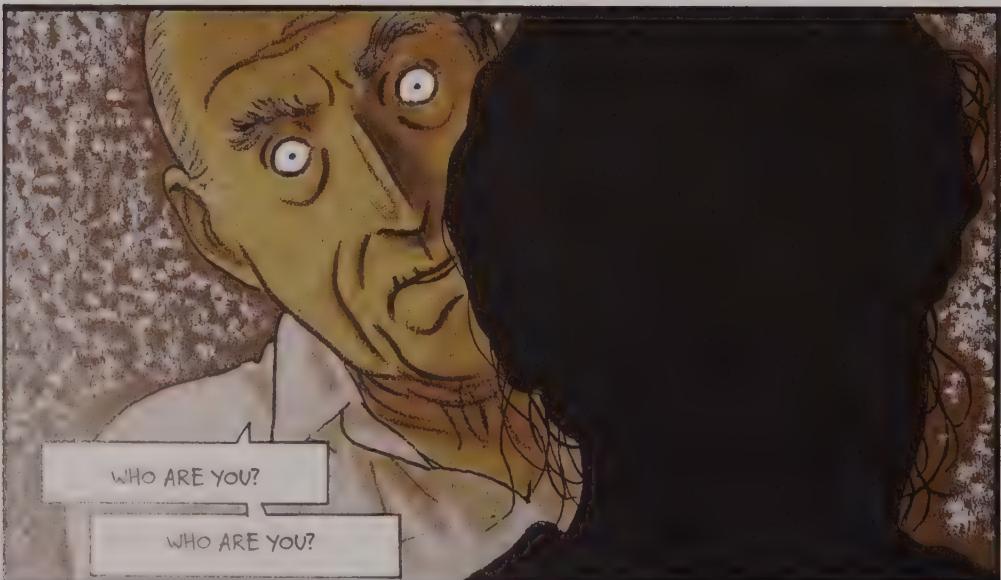
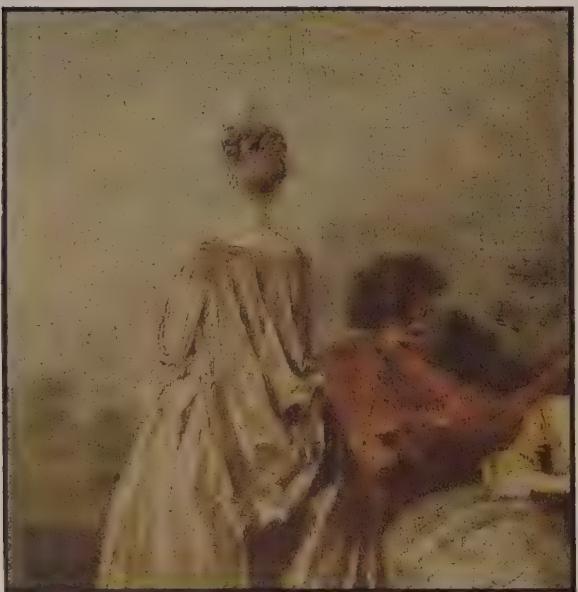
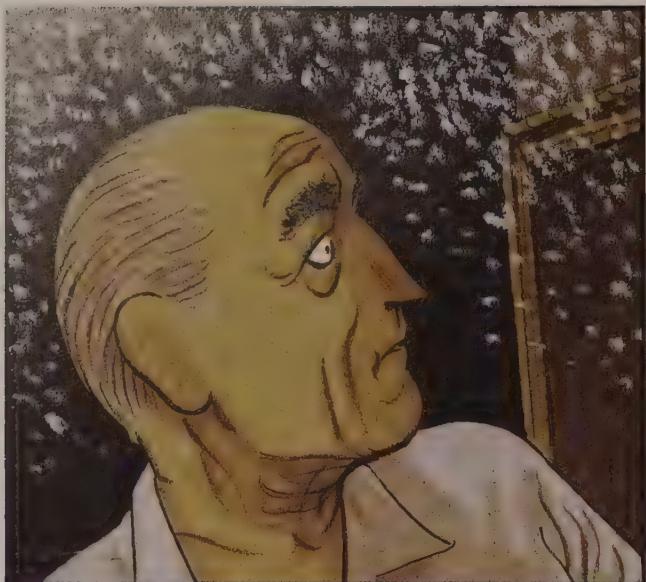
THIS WAY.













"THE EMBARKATION FOR CYTHERA"...

THE MARVELOUS WATTEAU.



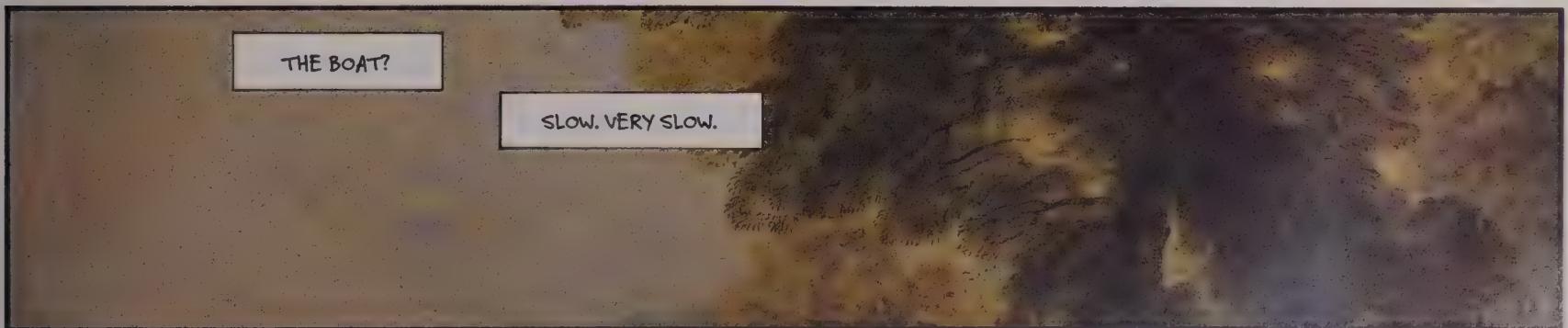
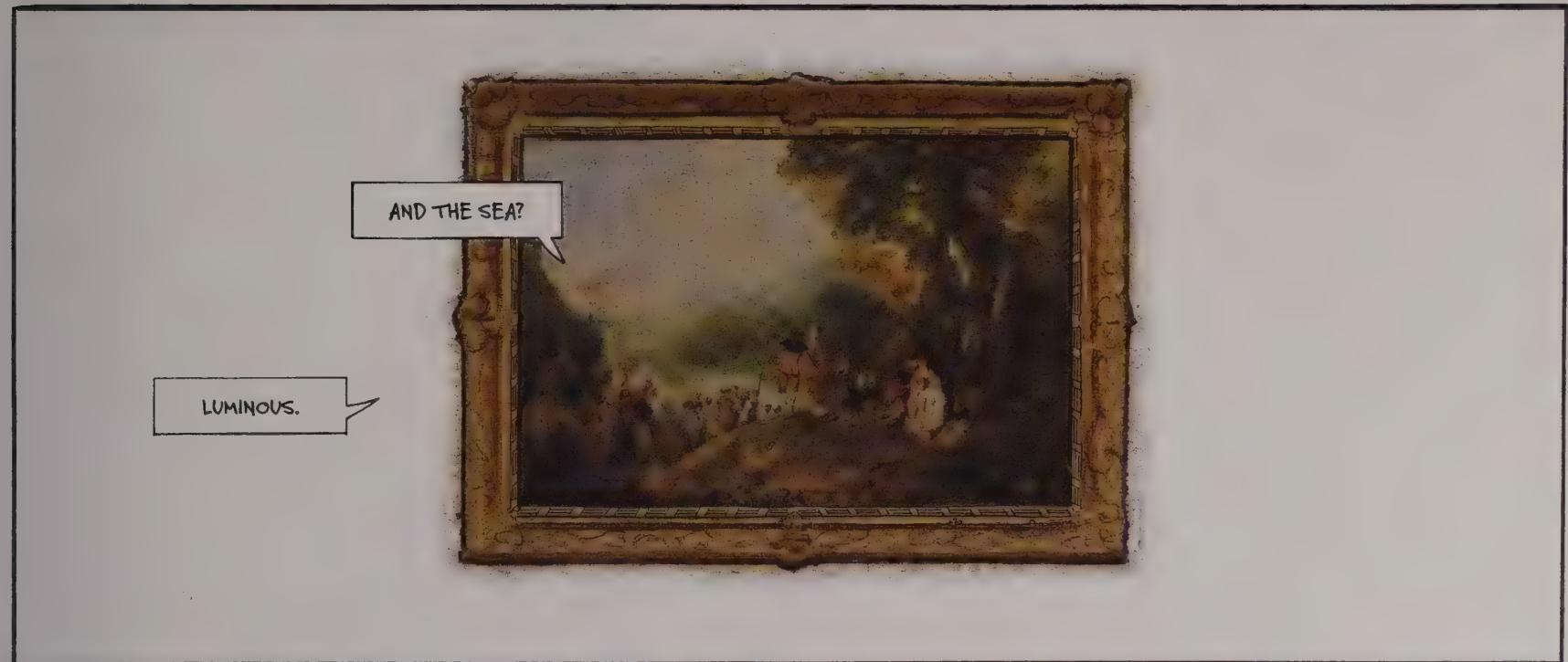
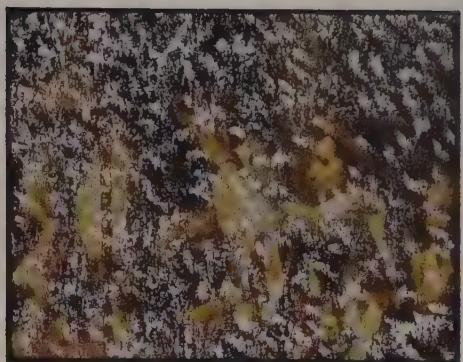
APHRODITE'S ISLAND...

THE ISLE OF LOVERS.











NEVER ENDING?



NEVER ENDING.

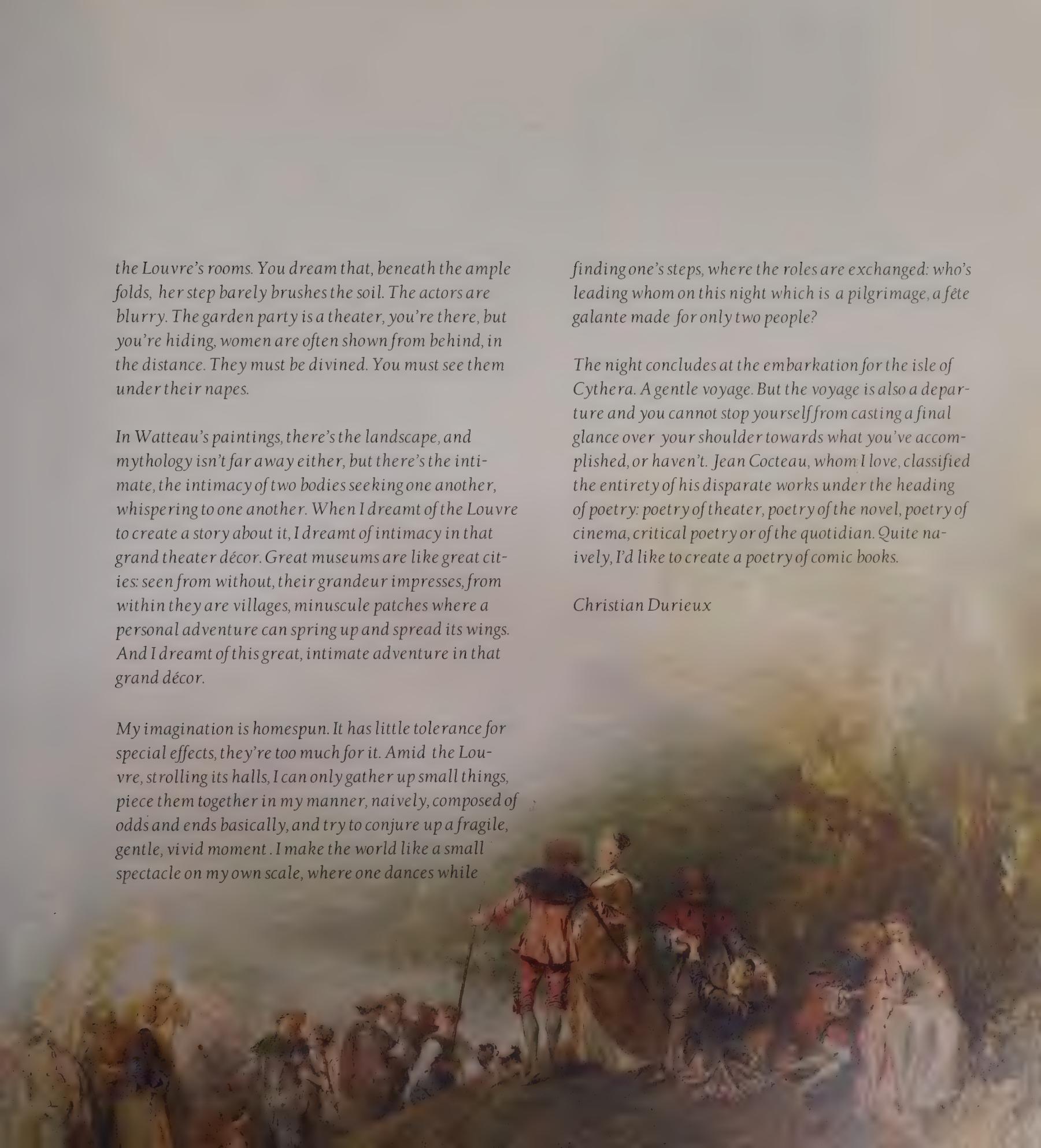
To love museums, you must love ghosts



At the Louvre, there is the ghost of Leonardo and that of Mona Lisa, but also the ghost of Francis I, who bought the Gioconda, and of Vincenzo Perugia, the glazier who stole it in 1911. There are the ghosts of the Greeks massacred at Scio and of the plague victims of Jaffa and of Delacroix who painted their suffering, there are the ghosts of Nazi boots. The Louvre is bestirred by silent movements, rustlings, tears, and hidden smiles. And there is the "fête gualante", the garden party, the ghost of Watteau and those of its actors.

Antoine Watteau died in 1721, well before the French Revolution, well before the other century. He was only 37 years old and he will remain the painter of the "fête galante." It has been said elsewhere that the Royal Academy created this genre for him especially when, in 1717, he presented the painting which gained him reception into that grand institution: The Pilgrimage to Cythera. It may be only a legend but no matter.

With Watteau, a gentle wind breathes through the Louvre, that of Zephyrs who, according to Hesiod, transported the young goddess of Love, Aphrodite, to the isle of Cythera. With Watteau, an enchanted world, elegant, delicate, melancholic too, traverses



the Louvre's rooms. You dream that, beneath the ample folds, her step barely brushes the soil. The actors are blurry. The garden party is a theater, you're there, but you're hiding, women are often shown from behind, in the distance. They must be divined. You must see them under their napes.

In Watteau's paintings, there's the landscape, and mythology isn't far away either, but there's the intimate, the intimacy of two bodies seeking one another, whispering to one another. When I dreamt of the Louvre to create a story about it, I dreamt of intimacy in that grand theater décor. Great museums are like great cities: seen from without, their grandeur impresses, from within they are villages, minuscule patches where a personal adventure can spring up and spread its wings. And I dreamt of this great, intimate adventure in that grand décor.

My imagination is homespun. It has little tolerance for special effects, they're too much for it. Amid the Louvre, strolling its halls, I can only gather up small things, piece them together in my manner, naively, composed of odds and ends basically, and try to conjure up a fragile, gentle, vivid moment. I make the world like a small spectacle on my own scale, where one dances while

finding one's steps, where the roles are exchanged: who's leading whom on this night which is a pilgrimage, a fête galante made for only two people?

The night concludes at the embarkation for the isle of Cythera. A gentle voyage. But the voyage is also a departure and you cannot stop yourself from casting a final glance over your shoulder towards what you've accomplished, or haven't. Jean Cocteau, whom I love, classified the entirety of his disparate works under the heading of poetry: poetry of theater, poetry of the novel, poetry of cinema, critical poetry or of the quotidian. Quite naively, I'd like to create a poetry of comic books.

Christian Durieux

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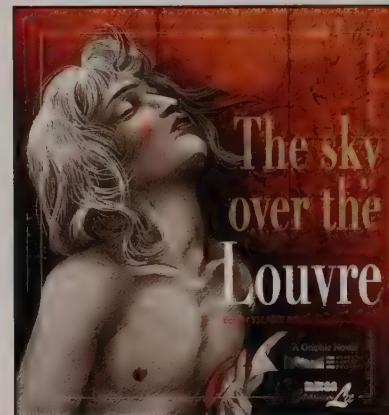
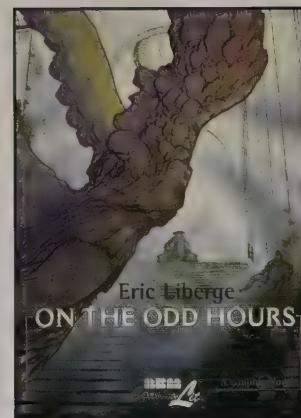
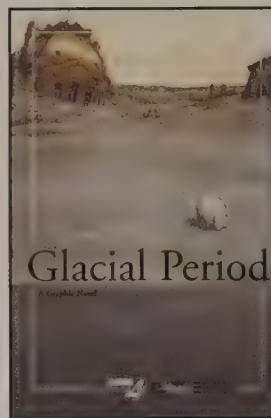
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Work. Chicago: R. F. Seymour, The Alderbrink press, 1916.



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